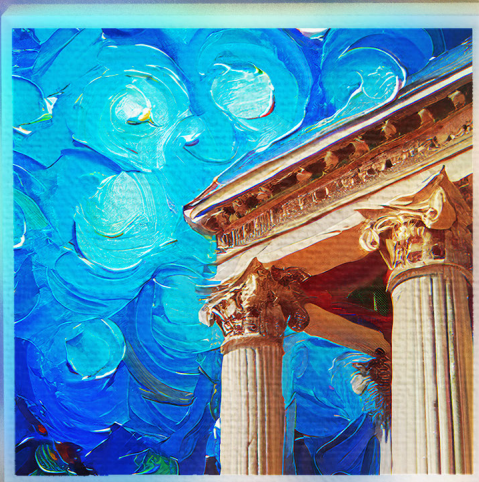


Ariel Magazine

Summer 2025 / Volume 1 / #55

אריאל אריאל מיניסטריס



THE JEW^S OF GREECE

HELLENISM,
HOLOCAUST,
AND HOPE
FOR THE
FUTURE



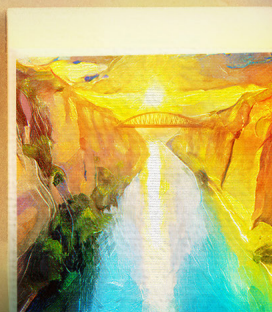
Plus:

Divorce and Remarriage
in the New Testament

Yeshua - The Jewish
Messiah: Proof from
Science

The History of Ariel
Germany

Testimony:
Matthew Sieger





2025 SHOSHANAH



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Our teaching focuses on
grounding and growing
believers of all ages
through an in-depth
study of the Bible from a
Messianic Jewish
perspective.



Ministry News

The Jewish Roots of Superman

Ahead of the July 11, 2025 release of the new Superman film, Danny Price II and Dr. Jeffrey Gutterman of Ariel Ministries explore the Jewish roots of this iconic character, revealing connections to Jewish history, theology, and Messianic themes.

Cover Story

The Jews of Greece—Hellenism, Holocaust, and Hope for the Future

Dr. Tim Sigler traces the long and complex history of Greek Jewry—from their early integration into the Hellenistic world to the devastation of the Holocaust and the ongoing efforts to preserve and renew their cultural legacy.

Topical Bible Study

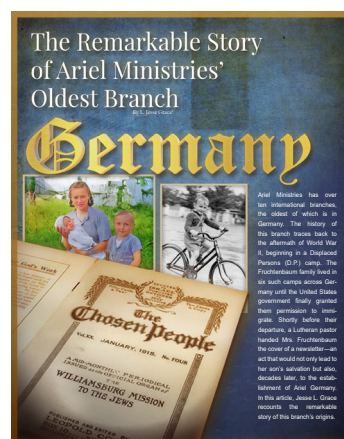
Divorce and Remarriage, Part 2

Dr. Fruchtenbaum examines the New Testament's teaching on divorce and remarriage.

Branch History

The Remarkable Story of Ariel Ministries' Oldest Branch

Ariel's oldest international branch began in postwar Germany, where a chance encounter in a D.P. camp helped spark Dr. Fruchtenbaum's journey of faith. L. Jesse Grace recounts how it led to the founding of Ariel Germany.



Apologetics

Yeshua Is the Jewish Messiah—Proof from Science

Thaddeus Kedziora examines how fulfilled prophecy, mathematical probability, and the science of information support the divine authorship of Scripture and confirm Yeshua's Messianic identity.

Testimony

"One Coincidence Too Many"

Matthew Sieger shares his powerful journey to faith and the string of "coincidences" that led him there.





Purpose Statement

Ariel Ministries exists in order to evangelize Jewish people and to disciple Jewish and Gentile believers through intensive Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

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“Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!” (Amos 4:12b)

This verse is just one among many that reveal the prophet Amos not as the inarticulate shepherd of rabbinic tradition—rustic, blunt, and tongue-tied—but as a masterful wordsmith and poet, much like Ezekiel. His book overflows with powerful declarations and majestic hymns that portray God in all His glory: sovereign, omnipotent, and yet still intimately personal.

Four months and twenty-seven days ago, my husband entered into glory. I am grateful to share that the global *mishpacha* of believers surrounded me with deep and meaningful support—through letters, calls, text messages, songs, generous gifts, and even practical help like sending a cleaning lady. These gestures carried us through those initial days when grief was raw and, at times, overwhelming.

I can also testify to the tremendous comfort found in God’s Word. My recent work on the book of Amos has been, perhaps unexpectedly, a source of delight. I first “met” Amos in a Sunday School class, where he was introduced as a crude shepherd and caretaker of sycamore figs. This time, I encountered a very different Amos. How foolish to think shepherds lack words! King David, the master poet of the Hebrew Bible, composed his most beautiful songs while tending sheep. Amos, too, speaks with a voice rich in imagery and conviction.

I love studying God’s Word. Once again, my work has become the Lord’s instrument to lift me from the here and now—from the valley of the shadow of death—and transport me into a realm untouched by pain or sorrow. A place where there is only Him: our glorious, merciful, fiercely loving God.

Be well, *mishpacha*! I wish you deep joy as you read this edition of *Ariel Magazine*, filled with articles on the Jewish roots of Superman, the rich and complex history of the Jewish community in Greece, the probability of Bible prophecy being fulfilled by chance, and much more. May these pieces draw you ever closer to the One who holds your heart.



Christiane Jurik



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Ariel Mission Branches & Representatives

MEET THE TEAM



03

ARIEL BRANCHES



Ariel Australia Chris & Lisa Savage

Website: www.ariel.org.au
Email: info@ariel.org.au

Chris and Lisa Savage represent Ariel Ministries in Australia. Based in Victoria, they teach the Scriptures from the Jewish perspective in weekly and bi-monthly classes and day seminars.



Ariel Canada Jacques Isaac & Sharon Gabizon

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Email: info@bethariel.ca

J. I. and Sharon Gabizon represent Ariel Ministries in Canada. The couple established a Messianic congregation in Montreal called Beth Ariel. The branch's multiple projects include translation work and door-to-door evangelism of Jewish homes in Montreal.



Jackie Fierman

Jackie Fierman has been with Ariel Canada since January of 2005, traveling and sharing about the ministry and teaching its material in Canada and the U.S.A.



Ariel India Bakul N. Christian

Email: bakulchristian@yahoo.co.in
Bakul Christian represents Ariel Ministries in India and resides with his wife in Ahmedabad. Using Ariel's extensive teaching material, he expounds the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective in his home state. He is also responsible for the translations into the Gujarati language.



Ariel Israel Sasha & Lilian Granovsky

Website: <https://www.ariel-israel.org.il/>
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The husband-and-wife team has been representing Ariel Ministries in Israel since October 2009. They are responsible for coordinating the translation of our manuscripts and books into Hebrew and Russian.



Ariel China

For safety issues, we must protect the identity of this branch. Please keep them in your prayers.



Ariel Germany

Website: www.cmv-duesseldorf.de
Email: cmv-cmv@t-online.de

Thanks to Manfred Künstler and his wife Hanna, Ariel Ministries has had a presence in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland since 1985. In 2002, the work was passed on to Georg Hagedorn who, eight years later, developed it into a full branch. A dedicated team leads this branch today, responsible for tasks such as translating Ariel materials and organizing conferences.



Ariel Hungary Ivan & Rita Nagy

Email: hungary@ariel.org

Ivan and Rita Nagy represent Ariel Ministries in Hungary. The husband-and-wife team has developed a Come & See website in Hungarian. They host several home Bible study groups, teaching from Ariel's materials. Their goal is to make teachings available to Jewish and Gentile believers and unbelievers in Hungary.



Ariel New Zealand

Website: <http://ariel.org.nz/>
Email: info@ariel.co.nz

This branch is led by Johan Jansen van Vuuren. For information about the many activities of this branch, please contact info@ariel.co.nz.



Ariel Italy Paolo & Martina Speciale

Website: www.arielitalia.it
Email: info@arielitalia.it

Paolo and Martina Speciale represent Ariel Ministries in Italy. As a husband-and-wife team, they coordinate the translation of our manuscripts and books into Italian. Their mission is to share the Messianic Jewish perspective throughout Italy through live teaching, social media, and seminars.



Ariel Ministries Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

Email: dfw@ariel.org

This branch is devoted to teaching the Word of God from a biblical Jewish perspective in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. They also travel throughout the United States. If you are interested in hosting a teaching session, symposium, or seminar, contact them at dfw@ariel.org.



Ariel Liberia Wion & Shirley Wleh

Email: wionwleh@yahoo.com

Wion and Shirley Wleh represent Ariel Ministries in Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa. The husband-and-wife team teaches the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective in workshops, seminars, and weekly classes designed for pastors and laypersons alike.



Ariel Hawaii David and Danielle Tamala

Email: info@arielhawaii.org

David and Danielle Tamala represent Ariel Ministries in the Hawaiian Islands. They founded Ka Hale O Hamashiach, a congregation on Oahu, and have become an invaluable resource for local churches. Among their numerous projects are youth outreach programs and the organization of conferences.



Ariel UK Stephen Reynolds, Richard Mountain, and Joel Bright

Email: sreynolds@ariel.org, rmountain@ariel.org

The UK branch was established in 2025 with the primary goal of teaching the Scriptures from a Messianic Jewish perspective and distributing Ariel materials throughout the country.

ARIEL REPRESENTATIVES



Roberto Anchondo – Field Representative (El Paso, Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico)

Email: robertopmttrust@yahoo.com

Roberto Anchondo represents Ariel Ministries in parts of the Southwest regions of the U.S. and some cities in Mexico. He is currently discipling groups of men in the Jewish perspective. He also works with numerous churches in Mexico, teaching the importance of standing by Israel.



John Metzger – Field Representative (North Carolina)

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Email: EhbedAriel@gmail.com

Missionary and author John Metzger represents Ariel Ministries in North Carolina. He is a teacher and speaker who actively travels throughout the central and eastern part of the U.S., speaking at various churches and conferences.



Jack Nakashima – Field Representative (San Antonio, TX)

Email: jacknariel@gmail.com

Jack Nakashima represents Ariel Ministries in San Antonio, TX. Previously serving in Israel, he is now available to teach and disciple in the U.S.



Expanding to Serve with New Facilities

At Camp Shoshanah, we are excited to share the progress of our construction project, which will enhance our mission of teaching the Bible from a Messianic Jewish perspective. Our growing community, especially in our youth and children's programs, has outgrown our current spaces. By God's grace, we are completing the lower level of Starks Dining Hall, which offers 7,000 square feet of beautiful space to meet these expanding needs.

The new development will feature five dedicated classrooms for our youth and children's programs. These spaces, scheduled to open in time for the 2025 program, are designed to foster dynamic, engaging environments where the next gen-

eration can dive deep into Scripture. Additionally, a music room and an indoor recreation area will give our children and teens space to be creative, stay active, and engage in fellowship, making their time at camp spiritually enriching and memorable.

At Camp Shoshanah, our motto is *Study Hard, Grow Strong!* This reflects our commitment to the faithful teaching of God's Word and its lasting impact on lives. Every class, activity, and interaction at Camp is centered around deepening understanding and strengthening faith. As we study God's Word, lives are transformed—our campers are not just learning but growing stronger in their relationship with the Lord. We pray that through this teaching, they are empowered to live out their faith with purpose and joy.

The Fruchtenbaum Library will be a key feature of our expansion, housing Dr. Fruchtenbaum's books and

personal memorabilia. This library will serve as a testament to Arnold's remarkable life, transformed by Messiah Yeshua. It will offer visitors a chance to learn about his incredible journey and his enduring influence in the Messianic community. The library will stand as a tribute to Arnold's dedication to teaching the Word of God and inspire future generations to walk closely with the Lord—to study hard and grow strong.

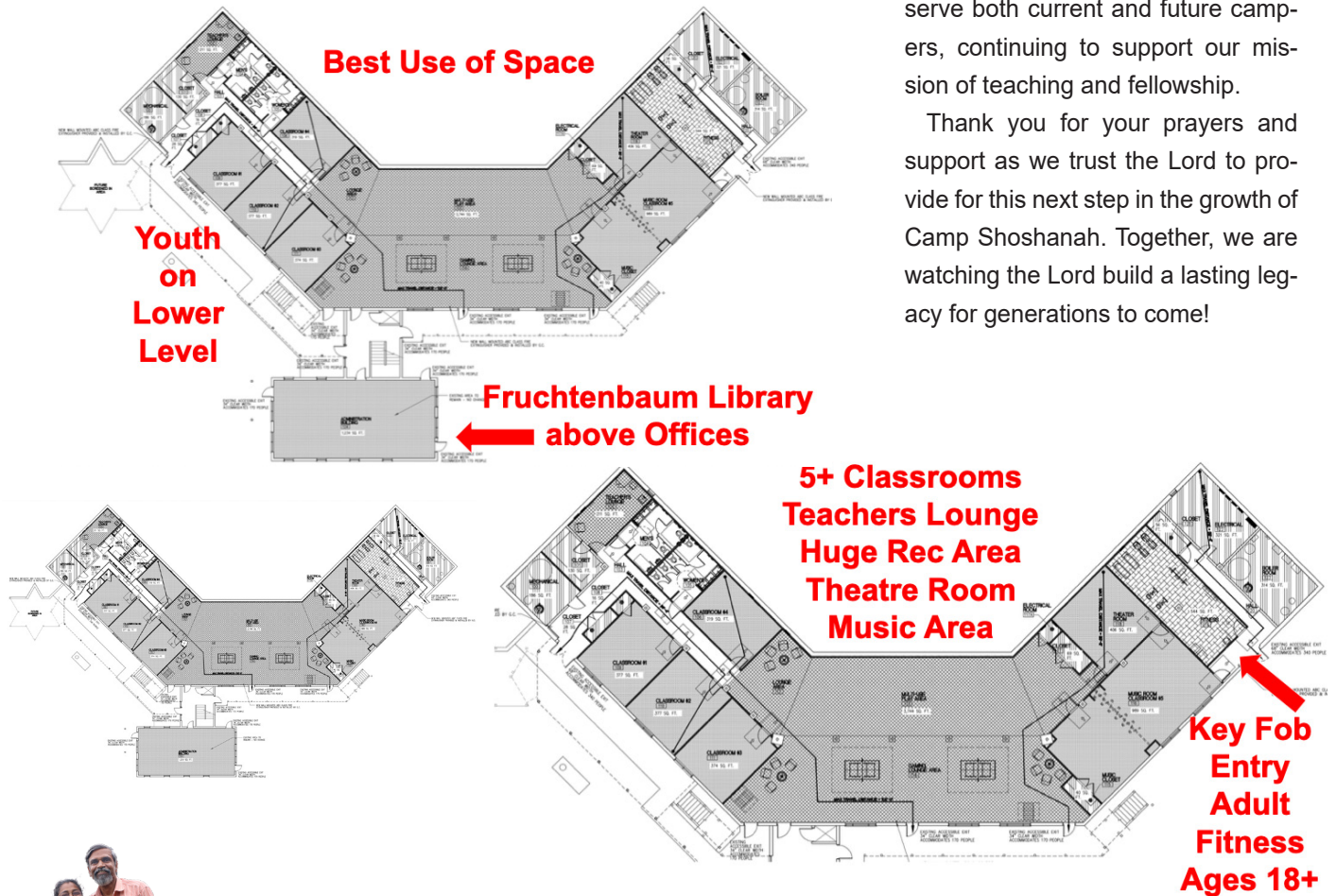
For our adult campers, we will be introducing a new fitness and workout room for ages 18 and up. This modern, keyless-entry facility will provide a convenient and accessible space for guests to stay active and healthy during their time at Camp. Whether it's a morning workout or a relaxing cooldown after a busy schedule, this space will offer a valuable resource for adults to care for their physical well-being alongside their spiritual growth.

The upstairs classrooms will be transformed into a vibrant retail and café area called *The Shuk* (Hebrew for "market"). A *shuk* is a lively, bustling marketplace at the heart of Israeli culture. More than just a place to shop, it's a sensory experience rich in sights, sounds, and aromas that reflect the diverse and historic fabric of Israel. *The Shuk* at Camp Shoshanah will be a central hub for fellowship—a place for campers and guests to gather, relax, and connect.

We are seeking the Lord's provision to raise an additional \$200,000 to complete the renovation of *The Shuk*. This is an exciting opportunity to contribute to a space that will

Below: As captured in this photo by Brian Crow, reconstruction of the lower level of the dining hall is well underway.





Ariel India

The following testimonial, edited for the purpose of this article, was submitted by Rev. Avinash Asari, pastor in the Church of North Gujarat, North India Gujarat Diocese.

"I have been serving as a full-time pastor in the Church of North Gujarat for the past 27 years. My journey with Ariel Ministries began in 2007, when I attended my first two-day Bible study seminar in Rajkot, located in the western part of Gujarat. Seven years later, in 2014, I participated in a second seminar organized by the Church of North India (CNI) in part-

nership with Ariel Ministries, held in Dahod, on the eastern side of the state.

"These two seminars opened my eyes to the importance of Israel in God's plan. While I did not fully grasp all the details at the time, I felt a strong desire to learn more. When I was transferred to the CNI Church in Borsad (central Gujarat), I invited Bakul Christian to teach our congregation, and I continued to learn alongside them. Bakul began by teaching on the eight covenants of the Bible and then worked through Dr. Fruchtenbaum's book *The Footsteps of the Messiah*. We studied together for about a year in 2018.

"By God's grace, I was later transferred to Ahmedabad, where Bakul also resides. This gave us the opportunity to meet almost daily. During this season, I immersed myself in Ariel's literature. The depth and clarity of the teaching amazed me. I became fully convinced of Israel's central place in God's redemptive plan, and I found no major theological inconsistencies in Dr. Fruchtenbaum's writings.

"Now that I've been transferred to North Gujarat once again, we are no longer able to meet regularly, but we still try to connect at least once a week. Ariel's teaching has truly transformed my entire understanding of the Bible."



Ariel Hungary

Walking with Purpose: A Year of Discipleship in Motion

Recently, Ivan has taken inspiration from Dr. Fruchtenbaum's walking routine and committed himself to walking 10,000 steps every day for 100 days. His walks serve not only as a means of maintaining physical health but also as a unique opportunity to combine learning and teaching. While walking, Ivan listens to biblical podcasts on a variety of topics—he has already completed more than 200 episodes.

At the same time, he uses this time to teach others. Several friends regularly call him with questions about the Bible and theology, and Ivan is glad to offer guidance. One of his closest friends is now using Ariel's materials to teach his own family—his wife and two adult children—thanks to what he has been learning from Ivan. By maximizing his time, Ivan has turned daily walking into a dual discipline of spiritual growth and ministry. His goal is to continue for an entire year without missing a single day.

Sowing and Reaping: Fruit from Faithful Study

As we sow the seeds of the Word, we may not always see immediate results. Yet, from time to time, we are encouraged by the fruit that does

appear. One such encouragement came recently from a brother in the countryside whom I've known for many years. He is a diligent student of Ariel's teachings through our website and has read the entire *Come and See* program more than seven times! He also makes use of the materials from the Messianic Conferences that we organized with Dr. Fruchtenbaum. His long-term desire is to plant a congregation that upholds this kind of teaching and maintains a Jewish frame of reference.

His testimony is powerful: "It is so good that slowly I have order in my thinking, in my knowledge, and in my theology. I knew nothing about the destiny of the Jews and unwittingly thought that the church replaced Israel. Now I know that this is not true. I have the right interpretation of the Bible."

Looking Ahead: Life of Messiah and New Connections

The *Life of Messiah* teaching series will continue in 2025 and promises to be the most detailed series we've ever offered. We are going through every verse together, carefully studying the Scriptures and growing deeper in our understanding of the Messiah.

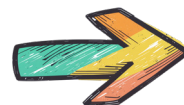
New visitors continue to find our homepage and express interest in Jewish biblical materials. Many of them are open to further discussions and eager to learn more. It is encouraging to see how the Lord is drawing people from different backgrounds to engage with His Word.

Personal Encounters: Holocaust Survivors and Hebrew Study

We recently had a special meeting with a Holocaust survivor whom we visit regularly. The head of Jews for Jesus in Hungary, Kata Tarr, organized a beautiful program for her, and we shared a meaningful time together. We were also able to speak about our Bible study.

During the celebration of Purim, Rita read the *Megillah*—the Book of Esther—at the synagogue where she has been learning Hebrew for seven years. The group meets weekly to read the Bible in Hebrew, which provides not only an excellent way to study the Scriptures but also opportunities for conversations with others who do not yet believe in Yeshua the Messiah.

Corporate Office



On July 11, 2025, a new Superman movie is set to premiere in theaters worldwide. In anticipation of its release, two devoted Superman fans at Ariel Ministries—Danny Price II (Ariel's Director of Corporate Office) and Dr. Jeffrey Gutterman (leader of Ariel's branch in Texas)—took the opportunity to explore the Jewish roots of this iconic character. The following article presents their findings, uncovering the deep connections between Superman's story and Jewish history, theology, and Messianic themes.



EXPLORING THE JEWISH ROOTS OF SUPERMAN



Superman, the quintessential American superhero, was created by two Jewish-American teenagers, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, in the late 1930s. Debuting in Action Comics #1 in 1938, he quickly became a cultural phenomenon, enduring for over 80 years as a symbol of hope, justice, and resilience.



THE JEWISH ROOTS OF SUPERMAN

While many view Superman as a universal icon, Superman's origins are deeply rooted in the Jewish heritage of his creators, reflecting themes of immigration, exile, and Messianic hope. Viewed through this lens, his narrative reveals parallels with Jewish and Christian Messianic perspectives, particularly those surrounding Yeshua.

Superman's origin story—a child sent from a dying world (Krypton) to a new one (Earth) for survival—mirrors the experiences of Jewish families fleeing persecution in Europe to seek safety and opportunity in America. Migration has been a defining theme in the historical existence of the Jewish people, from the time of Abraham to the present. With migration came a desire to assimilate to their new homelands. From the time that Abraham was called by God to move to a new land, the Jewish people have been

on the move. Of course, there were periods when they were able to settle for a while.

The Jewish people resided in the Promised Land as a nation from about 1500 B.C. to 586 B.C. when the Babylonians conquered Israel. From that time until 1948, they never had full governmental control of their land.

Historically, Jewish communities often migrated to new nations, sometimes by invitation, as rulers recognized their administrative skills and contributions to society. Many times, Jewish men became tax collectors or advisors to the rulers. When things were going well in these nations, the Jews prospered and lived in peace. However, when economic or political crises arose due to government corruption or incompetence, Jewish communities became scapegoats—leading to waves of persecution, forced expulsion, or worse.

SUPERMAN'S JEWISH ROOTS AND MESSIANIC PARALLELS

Superman's birth name, Kal-El, bears a striking resemblance to Hebrew linguistic structures. The syllable *Kal* is phonetically similar to Hebrew words meaning "all" or "voice," while *El* translates to "God." This combination can be understood as "The Voice of God" or "All God." This linguistic choice suggests divine purpose and identity, reflecting Jewish theological concepts of being chosen or set apart.

Kal-El's journey from Krypton to Earth mirrors the biblical story of Moses. Just as Moses was placed in a basket and sent down the Nile to escape death, Superman is placed in a spaceship and sent away from a dying world. Both are raised by adoptive parents in foreign lands and later emerge as deliverers and protectors of their people.

Superman's dual identity—Clark Kent and Superman—also reflects the Jewish immigrant experience in America. As Clark Kent, he embodies the assimilationist ideal: a mild-mannered, unassuming

journalist who seamlessly blends into society. This alter ego mirrors the reality faced by many Jewish immigrants who sought to adapt to American culture while still preserving their heritage. The tension between these two identities captures the struggle of maintaining one's cultural roots while striving to succeed in a new environment.

SUPERMAN AS A MESSIANIC FIGURE

Superman's narrative can be viewed through both Jewish and Christian Messianic lenses.

In Jewish tradition, the Messiah is a divinely chosen figure who will bring redemption and restoration to the world. Superman's role as a savior aligns with this concept, as he consistently intervenes to save humanity from destruction and injustice. His powers, origin, and mission evoke the image of a prophet or deliverer sent by God.

The 1978 *Superman* movie, directed by Richard Donner, further amplified these Messianic themes, particularly from a Christian perspective. Marlon Brando's portrayal of Jor-El, Superman's father, included lines that explicitly framed Superman as a Christ-like figure:

"They can be a great people, Kal-El; they wish to be. They only lack the light to show the way. For this reason above all, their capacity for good, I have sent them you... my only son."

This dialogue resonates deeply with Christian theology, where Yeshua is described as God's only begotten Son, sent to bring light and salvation to humanity (Jn. 3:16). Jor-El's commissioning of Superman mirrors the incarnation of Yeshua, who lived among humanity to reveal God's love and truth.

From a Christian perspective, Superman's story aligns with key aspects of Yeshua's life and mission:

1. Divine Origin and Mission: Both Superman and Yeshua are sent from above (Krypton and heaven, respectively) with a mission to guide and save humanity.

2. Adoptive Parents: Superman is raised by Jonathan and Martha Kent, while Yeshua grows up under the care of Joseph and Mary. Both sets of parents instill in their sons values of compassion, justice, and humility.

3. Sacrificial Love: Superman frequently sacrifices his well-being for the sake of others, reflecting Yeshua's ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

4. Dual Identity: Just as Superman lives as both Clark Kent and the Man of Steel, Yeshua embodies both human and divine natures. This duality highlights their ability to relate to humanity while transcending it.

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN MESSIANIC PERSPECTIVES

The Jewish Messianic hope centers on the arrival of a leader who will restore Israel and bring peace to the world. This expectation is rooted in prophecies, such as Isaiah 11:1-10, that envision a time of universal harmony and justice. Superman's role as a global protector aligns with this vision, embodying the hope for a better world.

In contrast, the Christian understanding of the Messiah focuses on Yeshua as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Within this perspective, Yeshua is the ultimate Savior who redeems humanity through His death and resurrection. Superman's narrative, particularly in the 1978 film, echoes this theology, emphasizing themes of sacrificial love, redemption, and the triumph of good over evil.



The 2006 film *Superman Returns* also incorporates several gospel themes, reinforcing Superman's Messianic symbolism. Superman had left Earth to look for his home planet, Krypton, and was absent for five years. In a pivotal scene, Superman takes Lois Lane high above Metropolis and asks, "What do you hear?" When Lois responds, "Nothing," Superman replies, "I hear everything."

Referring to an article Lois wrote for *The Daily Planet*, he reminds her, "You wrote that the world doesn't need a savior, but every day, I hear people crying for one."

Near the end of the movie, after saving the world once more, Superman finds himself severely weakened and on the verge of death. As he falls back toward Earth, his body reclines with arms outstretched, mirroring the crucifixion pose of Yeshua on the cross.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

Superman's enduring appeal stems from his ability to embody universal values while also reflecting specific cultural and theological themes. For Jewish audiences, he represents the resilience and hope of the immigrant experience. For believers in Yeshua, he serves as a metaphor for Messiah's redemptive mission. These overlapping interpretations highlight the richness of Superman's character and the genius of Siegel and Shuster's creation.

SO WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO US?

Like Yeshua, Superman bridges cultures. Whether viewed through the lens of Moses, Yeshua, or the immigrant experience, Superman remains a beacon of hope, reflecting the enduring human longing for a savior. By bridging Jewish and Christian Messianic perspectives, he transcends his origins to become a universal symbol of justice, compassion, and the capacity for good.

He gives us a place to start telling the story of Yeshua. On July 11, 2025, our friends—both Jewish and Gentile—will head to theaters to watch the tale of a godlike man who comes to Earth and must assimilate into its world. Let us take this moment to engage with our culture and share the story of the Messiah: the One who came to this earth, lived a sinless life, died a purposeful death, and rose from the grave.

Yeshua's story stands as a testament to the power of storytelling—conveying deep truths and inspiring hope. But more than that, "it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to **the Jew first** and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

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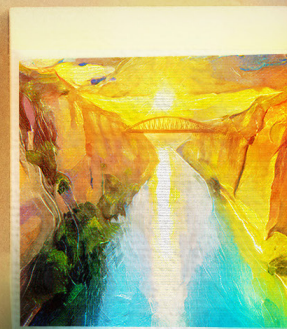
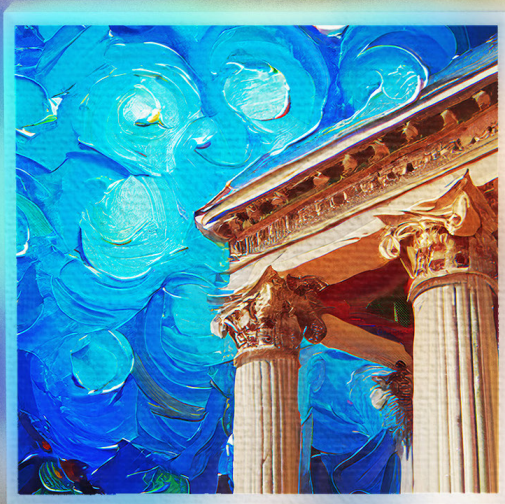




THE JEWS OF GREECE

HELLENISM,
HOLOCAUST,
AND HOPE
FOR THE
FUTURE

By Tim M. Sigler, Ph.D.





Growing up in the United States, one might think that matzo ball soup and gefilte fish are an essential part of Jewish identity. But that's not the case in Greece. Rather than the northeastern European inspirations of Ashkenazi Jewry, the cuisine and many other Jewish cultural practices in Greece are much more influenced by Sephardic Jews who were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. As one member of the community put it, "We never ate matzo balls or gefilte fish. We ate the whole fish—you don't ground up what you're not ashamed of!" But the chronicle of this ancient community actually goes back much further than the Late Middle Ages.

Jews and Greeks have a long and complicated history of cultural and military interaction. The word "Javan" (Hebrew, *Yavan*) is mentioned six times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 10:2, 4; 1 Chron. 1:5, 7; Isa. 66:19; Ezek. 27:13) and refers both to Javan the individual descendant of Noah's son Japheth and to Javan the people group from his lineage. Since the letters *j*, *i*, and *y* are often interchangeable in various alphabetic systems, it is easy to see how the name Javan is associated with the alternatively spelled *loan* from whom the Ionians or Greek speakers from western Anatolia and the Aegean islands derive their name. So, the Greeks, or

their forebearers, are mentioned right away in the early account of Genesis.

Since Israel serves as the land bridge between three continents, Jews were at times caught in the middle of conflicts between the Greeks and the Persians. The Jerusalem-based prophets Haggai and Zechariah both date their calling to the second year of the Persian king Darius I (the Great), who reigned 521–486 B.C. and lost the famous Battle of Marathon to the Athenian Greeks in 490 B.C.¹ His vicious son Xerxes I (the Great) regained a temporary Persian advantage over the Greeks ten years later in the Battle of Thermopylae.² Xerxes I is also known as Ahasuerus, who took Esther as his queen and allowed the Jewish people to defend themselves against the enemies that wicked Haman the Agagite had incited against them—the background to the Feast of Purim. As we'll see, Hanukkah has an even more direct link to the intersection of Jewish and Greek history.

HELLENISM

Alexander the Great, son of Philip II of Macedon, conquered the Persians and established a rule that stretched from the Mediterranean all the way to China. Yet he died young and unexpectedly in 323 B.C., and his empire was divided among his four successors

(the *Diadochi*). However, none of these successors were his rightful heirs. His Macedonian influence was diminished, and there was confusion for forty years before the Hellenistic world would be "settled into four stable power blocs: Ptolemaic Egypt, Seleucid Mesopotamia and Central Asia, Attalid Anatolia, and Antigonid Macedon."³ All of this was prophesied years before by the prophet Daniel (Dan. 11:3–4; 8:21–22).⁴

These four regions of rule became the Hellenistic Empire, which lasted from the end of Alexander's wars until 146 B.C. with the annexation of Greece by the Roman Republic. The influence and imposition of Greek language and culture took hold throughout the empire, and many conquered people groups appreciated the art, architecture, education, entertainment, and wealth that the Greeks had to offer.

Judea was now ruled by Seleucid Greeks to the north in Syria, and many welcomed the cultural influences of Hellenism. Even the word *synagogue* comes from Jewish Koiné Greek and means "an assembly." According to a legend recorded in the *Letter of Aristeas*, the Greek king Ptolemy II Philadelphus asked seventy-two Jewish scholars to translate the Torah into Greek for his library in Alexandria. Eventually the rest of the Tanakh was translated into Greek and is known as





the Septuagint (or LXX). No matter how they may have been produced, the Old Greek (OG) translations of the Hebrew Bible have become an important witness to the history of the Scriptures.

One of the Seleucid Greek rulers was Antiochus IV. He called himself *Epiphanes* ("God manifest"), and others mockingly called him *Epimanes* ("the Madman"). In 167 B.C., he entered the Temple in Jerusalem, removed its golden menorah, altar of incense, and table of showbread, and stole its veils and tapestries. On the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month of Chislev, Antiochus forced the daily sacrifices to cease when he offered a pig on an altar he had erected in the honor of Zeus atop the altar designated for the worship of the God of Israel.⁵ Judah the Maccabee led a revolt against the Greek forces and retook Jerusalem, rededicating the Temple exactly three years later, on Chislev 25, 164 B.C. (1 Macc. 1:54; 4:59). Hanukkah celebrates this testament to Jewish survival with the Feast of Dedication. Interestingly, "the Greek word *hellenismos* is first used of the adoption of or enthusiasm for Greek culture"⁶ in this Jewish book recording the story of Hanukkah (2 Macc. 4:13). It is also this same work that maps out a number of Greek cities where Jewish communities developed after this reprisal in Jerusalem.

According to 1 Maccabees 15:23 and also the Jewish historian Philo (c. 30 BCE – c. 45 CE), in the years following the revolt the Jews built up communities in Sparta, Delos, Sicyon, Samos, Rhodes, Kos, Gortynia, Crete, Cnidus, Aegina, Thessaly, Boeotia, Macedonia, Aetonia, Attica, Argos, Corinth and Cyprus.⁷

CORINTH AND CENCHREAE

The book of Acts records that when Paul visited Greece, he found well-established Jewish communities in these same places and others. He traveled to Corinth—a cosmopolitan city located on the southwest side of the Isthmus, flanking the Gulf of Corinth on the west and the Saronic Gulf on the east. The Isthmus of Corinth connects the Peloponnese region in the south to Attica in the north and east. The operation of the *Diolkos*, a paved trackway for the transport of ships and goods, capitalized on this position by providing an expedient alternative to the formidable 190-mile journey around the Peloponnesian Peninsula. The Roman Emperor Nero, who ruled A.D. 54–68, brought six thousand Jewish prisoners from Judea to attempt the digging of a canal through the isthmus, but troubles elsewhere diverted his attention, and it was not until 1893 that the canal was finally completed.⁸

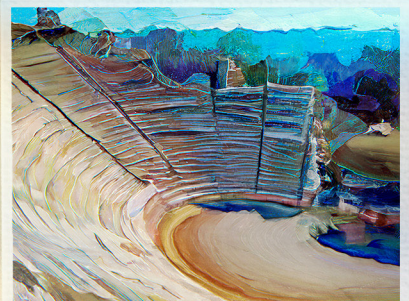
Corinth commanded three major harbors: Cenchreae and Schoenus on the eastern coast and Lechaenum on the western side. Paul shaved his head as part of a Nazirite vow at Cenchreae (Num. 6:1-21; Acts 18:18), and Phoebe was a deaconess who served the believing community there (Rom. 16:1).

PHILIPPI

Philippi—named after Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great—is an important city that some speculate did not have a synagogue structure in the first century. While not a hub of Jewish life in the first century, it was on the Via Egnatia and important enough that Paul and Silas visited the city en route to Thessaloniki. Unfortunately, they quickly became unwelcomed by local Gentiles after ruining their fortune-making through healing their slave girl from her demonic fortune-telling (Acts 16:12-40).

Jewish men and women gathered by the river in Philippi as the appointed place for prayers (Acts 16:16). While a recent discovery of a gravestone mentions the presence of a synagogue at a later time, it should be noted that there is not a synagogue or active Jewish community in Philippi today. Nevertheless, Philippi had a group that met for regular prayer near the Gangites River.

According to Jewish pietists con-





cerned about assimilation, a minimum of ten Jewish men was necessary to constitute a regular synagogue and thus indicate a city where Jewish people would be likely to form their own community; this number of Jewish men may not have lived in Philippi. But in places with no official synagogue, Jewish people preferred to meet in a ritually pure place near water; ritual washing of hands before prayer seems to have been standard in Diaspora Judaism, and excavations show the importance of water to synagogues.⁹

ATHENS

In Athens, a famous inscription bears the image of a menorah and a lulav, commemorating the golden lampstand from the tabernacle in Exodus 25:31-35 and the bundle of leafy plants to be waved at the Feast of Tabernacles/Sukkot mentioned in Leviticus 23:39-40.¹⁰ It was discovered in the agora—the gathering place at the center of the city's athletic, commercial, artistic, spiritual, and political life. Some have suggested that this inscription provides evidence of a fifth-century synagogue in the city.

Throughout Israel, a number of mosaic floors also illustrate life in Hellenistic Jewish communities. Common images include menorahs, lulavs, shofars, and incense shovels. These typically sur-

round an image of a Torah ark (*aron hakodesh*), which derives its name from the Ark of the Covenant that was first in the Holy of Holies of the traveling Tabernacle and later housed in the Temple in Jerusalem. These beautiful masterpieces evidence sophisticated artistry, but some synagogue mosaics also expose the syncretistic blending of Judaism with the pagan aspects of Hellenism. The famous floors at Hamat Tiberias, Beit Alpha, Naaran, Susiya, Huseifa, and Sepphoris (Tzippori) include zodiac wheels and images of pagan deities along with traditionally Jewish and biblical themes. This mishmash of religious beliefs was alive and well in Athens and provided the backdrop for Paul's famous speech on the Areopagus (Mars Hill) in Acts 17:16-34.

IOANNINA

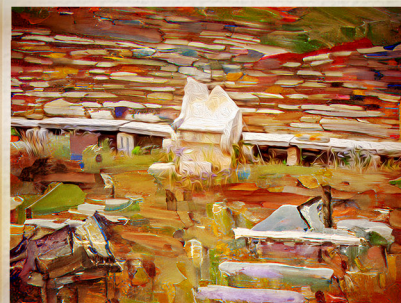
When considering the Jewish history of Greece, there are actually two very diverse traditions, and the history of Ioannina illustrates this better than anywhere else.¹¹ Romaniote Jews arrived 2,300 years ago to appreciate cultural and economic opportunities in the years following Alexander, and Sephardic Jews arrived just over five hundred years ago after the expulsion from Spain in 1492.¹² Romaniote Jews spoke Greek and assimilated with the majority culture, but they also had

"their own language, Yevanic, or Judeo-Greek, a version of Greek infused with Hebrew and written with the Hebrew script."¹³ Sephardic Jews arrived from Spain and Portugal, where they spoke Ladino, a Judeo-Spanish language written in Hebrew script. In the centuries following 1492, most of the Romaniote communities were assimilated by the more numerous Sephardim.

Ioannina, a postcard-pretty town in northwestern Greece with a medieval fortress perched by a bright blue lake and surrounded by snow-capped mountains, once was the center of Romaniote Jewish life. Today, however, the community in Ioannina numbers fewer than 50 members, most of them elderly. The last time the community celebrated a bar mitzvah was in 2000.¹⁴

The Romaniote hold the record for having the most ancient synagogue communities in the Mediterranean context as well as the most enduring synagogue in the Americas. "A ruined second-century BCE synagogue on the Aegean island of Delos is believed to be the oldest discovered in the Diaspora."¹⁵ In the United States, a community named after the original town of Ioannina is called Kehila Kedosha Janina. It is "tucked between a Chinese merchant and a glass shop in New York's Lower East Side, [and]

Continued on page 38





DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

PART 2 By Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Th.M., Ph.D.





In this two-part article, Dr. Fruchtenbaum examines the issue of divorce and remarriage. The first part, published in the Spring 2025 edition of *Ariel Magazine*, analyzed divorce and remarriage in the Hebrew Bible, exploring its principles and practices. The second part addresses divorce and remarriage in the New Testament, focusing on how its principles and laws apply to believers today.

In the first part of this article, we examined the Old Testament teachings on divorce, where two grounds for divorce were established:

1. Sexual incompatibility (Deuteronomy 24). A husband could divorce his wife if he was displeased with her sexual performance. However, divorce was never commanded or ideal; reconciliation was always the preferred course of action.

2. Religious incompatibility (Ezra and Nehemiah). To preserve Israel's spiritual purity and prevent idolatry, God explicitly commanded the dissolution of interfaith marriages.

Having established these foundations, we now turn to the New Testament to examine its teachings on divorce and remarriage. This study will focus on three key passages and their relevance for believers today.



1. Matthew 5:31-32

³¹*It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: ³²but I say unto you, that every one that puts away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, makes her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away commits adultery.*

In verse 31, Yeshua quoted Deuteronomy 24:1, which established sexual incompatibility as grounds for divorce under the Mosaic Law. However, in verse 32, He presented His own authoritative teaching on the matter under grace. The Greek construction of the word “I” is emphatic, highlighting that Yeshua’s pronouncement carried divine authority, just as Moses’s did, since both derive from God. With this statement, Yeshua established a definitive standard for divorce and remarriage in the new dispensation.

The implication of Yeshua’s teaching is that, as a general rule, divorce and remarriage are not ideal. Even in cases of immorality, the preferred course is always reconciliation and restoration of the marriage. However, Yeshua acknowledged that there is one legitimate ground for divorce: *fornication*. The Greek term used here, *porneia*, is a broad term encompassing various forms of sexual sin, including premarital sex, extra-marital sex, adultery, and homosexuality. In this passage, Yeshua specifically referred to adultery as the type of *fornication* that justifies divorce.

It is important to remember that under the Mosaic Law, adultery was

not grounds for divorce but for capital punishment, as the guilty party was to be stoned to death. This left the innocent spouse free to remarry, not as a divorcee but as a widow or widower. However, with the shift from the Mosaic Law to the dispensation of grace, Yeshua declared that adultery would no longer warrant execution. Instead, it now constituted valid grounds for divorce.

Yeshua emphasized that if a divorce occurs for reasons other than adultery, any subsequent remarriage results in an ongoing adulterous relationship: *every one that puts away his wife... makes her an adulteress*. The Greek term for “makes,” *poiei*, is in the present indicative active tense, indicating continuous action. A husband who divorces his wife “is making” her a sinner. If his wife remarries after an unbiblical divorce, it does not result in a single act of adultery but an ongoing state of adultery. Additionally, the term for “adulteress,” *moicheuthēnai*, is the aorist infinitive passive of the verb *moicheuó*, meaning “to commit adultery.” Again, the idea is that the divorced woman enters her new marriage—and thus a continuous adulterous relationship—because of actions initiated against her by her husband. While she remains personally responsible for her sin, the husband who wrongfully divorces her bears responsibility for putting her in a position where adultery is unavoidable upon remarriage.

The same is true for her spouse. A man who marries a woman divorced on unbiblical grounds also commits adultery: *and whosoever shall marry*

her when she is put away commits adultery. The Greek verb for “commits adultery,” *moichatai*, is in the present tense, again emphasizing that the man enters into an ongoing adulterous relationship. The reason for this is that the woman did not have legitimate, biblical grounds for divorce, meaning that in God’s eyes, her previous marriage remains valid.

The key takeaway from these two verses is that under the New Covenant, adultery is the only biblical ground for divorce. In cases of unbiblical divorce, both the divorced woman and the man who marries her enter into a continuous adulterous relationship. This principle is further developed in the next key passage, Matthew 19:3-9.

2. Matthew 19:3-9

³*And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? ⁴And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? ⁶So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder. ⁷They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? ⁸He said unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it has*



not been so. ⁹And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and he that marries her when she is put away commits adultery.

In verse 3, the Pharisees approached Yeshua with a test question: *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?* This question was meant to probe Yeshua's interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1. The Pharisees hoped to challenge His rabbinical and legal knowledge, using His response as leverage against Him. The historical background of this debate involved two prominent Pharisaic schools: the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai. These two groups held conflicting interpretations of Deuteronomy 24:1, particularly regarding what constituted a legitimate reason for a man to divorce his wife.

The School of Shammai took a strict approach, interpreting the phrase "unseemly thing" in Deuteronomy 24:1 as referring solely to marital unfaithfulness. According to their view, divorce was only permissible in cases of adultery or serious moral failure, emphasizing the sanctity and permanence of marriage.

The School of Hillel, by contrast, adopted a much broader interpretation. They argued that "unseemly

thing" could refer to any form of displeasure, even trivial matters. A man could divorce his wife for something as insignificant as burning his food. This lenient approach effectively made divorce easy and common, allowing men to dismiss their wives for almost any reason.

At the time, Hillel's view was dominant, making divorce common and easily abused. Instead of siding with either group, Yeshua pointed back to God's original intent for marriage, reaffirming its permanence. He quoted Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, emphasizing that marriage was designed to be a permanent union, not something easily dissolved: *Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?* (Mt. 19:4b-5). While individuals are free to choose whom they marry and to commit themselves to marriage vows, the first sexual union on the wedding night establishes a unique bond. In that moment, God Himself performs the *yoking together*—the divine *gluing* of the couple into a unified entity. This divine act sanctifies the marital choice, reinforcing the permanence of the union as part of God's original design.

At this point, the Pharisees challenged Yeshua further, asking Him in verse 7: *Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?* Their question implies a contradiction between God's original design for marriage and the Mosaic allowance for divorce. If marriage was meant to be permanent, as Yeshua had stated, then why did Moses permit a legal process for divorce?

Yeshua responded in verses 8-9 by clarifying Moses's intent. First, in verse 8, He corrected their misunderstanding, stating that Moses did not command divorce; he merely permitted it due to the *hardness* of their hearts. Divorce was never a divine ideal, nor was it instituted as a commandment. Rather, Moses regulated an already existing practice, setting parameters to limit its abuse. The original purpose of marriage was permanence, but because of human sinfulness, divorce was tolerated under the Mosaic Law.

Yeshua then introduced His own regulation in verse 9: *Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and he that marries her when she is put away commits adultery.* At this point, Mark's parallel account (Mk. 10:12) adds an important detail: *and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she commits adultery.* The reason Matthew omitted this statement while Mark included it lies in their respective audiences. Matthew wrote his Gospel for the Jewish people, and under Jewish law, di-





divorce was a one-way process: Only the husband could initiate divorce, while the wife had no legal right to divorce her husband. This remains the case in modern Israeli law—only the husband can issue a divorce, not the wife. Because Jewish law did not allow for a wife divorcing her husband, Matthew saw no need to include this additional statement.

Mark, however, was writing to a Roman audience, and in Roman law, both husbands and wives could initiate divorce. Therefore, Mark included the additional statement that a wife who divorces her husband under unbiblical circumstances is equally guilty of adultery.

In both accounts, whether the divorce is initiated by the husband or the wife, remarriage after an unbiblical divorce results in adultery. The one who divorces without biblical grounds becomes guilty on two counts of adultery: first, by causing the former spouse to commit adultery when they remarry; and second, by committing adultery themselves when they enter into a new marriage. The one who marries a divorcee from an unbiblical divorce also commits adultery.

Adultery, then, has the effect of dissolving the marriage before God. The guilty party has been joined to another. Scripture presents sexual

union as creating a oneness (I Cor. 6:15-16), regardless of prior marital status. Even if the adulterous individual remains legally married to their spouse, they have, in God's eyes, been joined to someone else.

As seen in these passages from Matthew and Mark, adultery is established as a legitimate ground for divorce. If a divorce occurs on these grounds, then the innocent party is also granted the right to remarry. In such cases, remarriage does not constitute adultery, as the previous marital bond has already been severed due to the infidelity of the guilty spouse.

3. I Corinthians 7:10-16

The final key passage addressing divorce and remarriage is I Corinthians 7:10-16. Verses 10-11 provide instructions for marriages in which both spouses are believers, while verses 12-16 address mixed marriages—those in which both partners were originally unbelievers but one has since come to faith.

Concerning married believers, verses 10-11 affirm God's directive will:

¹⁰But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband ¹¹(but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else

be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife.

Neither spouse should leave the other when both are believers. This teaching comes directly from *the Lord* (cf. Mt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9). However, recognizing that divorce among believers may still occur, the passage then outlines God's permissive will. If a believing couple divorces, the divorcees are given only two options:

1. They *remain unmarried*, maintaining a state of singleness. The Greek verb here is in the present tense, implying a continuous action—they are to remain unmarried indefinitely.

2. They seek reconciliation, restoring the marriage. The Greek verb for "be reconciled," *katallagētō*, is in the aorist tense, signifying a once-and-for-all event.

The one option that is explicitly **not** permitted is remarriage to another person. As long as both parties remain unmarried, reconciliation remains a possibility. By God's grace, He can work to restore the marriage, and remarriage to a new spouse would permanently eliminate this opportunity. However, if one of the divorcees does remarry, that individual commits adultery (cf. Mt. 5:32; 19:9). At this point, reconciliation is no longer an option. Because one spouse has broken the covenant by entering a new union, the other spouse is then free to remarry without committing adultery.

This principle applies only when both parties in the marriage are believers. In the case of a mixed marriage, a different standard applies.



Concerning mixed marriages, verses 12-16 state:

¹²*But to the rest say I, not the Lord: If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her.*

¹³*And the woman that has an unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. ¹⁵Yet if the unbelieving departs, let him depart: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God has called us in peace. ¹⁶For how know you, O wife, whether you shall save your husband? or how know you, O husband, whether you shall save your wife?*

This passage does not refer to cases in which a believer knowingly marries an unbeliever, as such unions are explicitly forbidden in Scripture (II Cor. 6:14-18). Instead, it addresses situations where both spouses were originally unbelievers, but over time, one has come to faith in Messiah.

Verses 12-13 make it clear that under the New Covenant, religious incompatibility is no longer a legitimate ground for divorce. A believer cannot initiate divorce solely because their spouse is an unbeliever. If the unbelieving spouse is willing to maintain the marriage, then the believer must do the same.

The reason for this command is given in verse 14: The unbelieving spouse is *sanctified* through the be-

lieving partner. This does not mean that the unbeliever is automatically saved but rather that they are now in a unique position to be exposed to the gospel. Their marriage to a believer sets them apart as a direct recipient of God's influence.

The verse further declares that if interfaith marriages were inherently sinful, their offspring would be considered *unclean*. But since mixed marriages remain legitimate, their children are likewise regarded as *holy*—not in a salvific sense but in the sense that they remain under God's covenantal blessing.

However, verse 15 presents an exception. If the unbelieving spouse chooses to leave, the believing spouse is commanded not to fight it. The Greek term translated "let him depart," *chōrizesthō*, comes from *chōrizō*, a term also used in Matthew 19:6 to describe the dissolution of a marriage union. The Greek voice here is middle, indicating that the initiative must come from the unbeliever. The believing spouse must never be the one to seek the divorce. However, if the unbeliever requests the divorce, the believer must grant it.

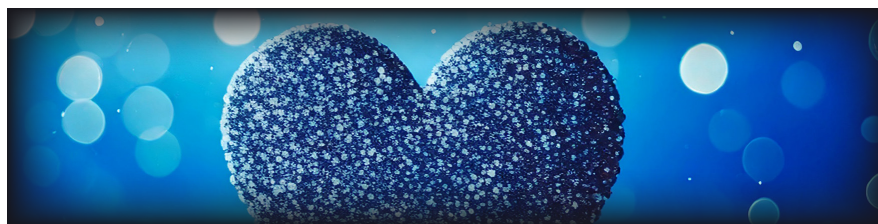
The critical question is whether the believing spouse is free to remarry in this situation, and the answer is: *the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases*. The Greek verb

for "is under bondage," *dedoulōtai*, comes from the infinitive *douloō* and refers to the marriage bond. It is in the perfect tense, indicating that from the moment the unbeliever initiates and finalizes the divorce, the believing spouse is released from the marriage and remains free. The passive voice shows that the freedom is received, not self-initiated—the believer is free because of the unbeliever's actions. This principle is confirmed in I Corinthians 7:17-28 and 39.

Romans 7:1-3 adds that when a spouse dies, the surviving partner is free to remarry.

The last statement in verse 15, *God has called us in peace*, reinforces the command not to resist an unbeliever who insists on divorce. The believer must allow the separation to happen peacefully.

Finally, verse 16 explains the underlying reason for these commands. The believer cannot presume that remaining in the marriage will automatically lead to the spouse's salvation. Likewise, forcing the unbeliever to stay does not guarantee their salvation. Because the final outcome is uncertain, believers must simply follow the biblical commands—remaining in the marriage if the unbeliever is willing but granting a peaceful divorce if the unbeliever chooses to leave.



Four Legitimate Grounds for Remarriage

In the context of the New Testament, Scripture provides four legitimate grounds for remarriage:

1. The Death of a Spouse: The surviving spouse is free to remarry (Rom. 7:1-3; I Cor. 7:39).

2. Divorce Due to Adultery: If a divorce occurs because of adultery, remarriage is permissible (Mt. 19:9).

3. Divorce Initiated by an Unbelieving Spouse: If an unbelieving spouse chooses to leave the marriage, the believing spouse is no longer bound and is free to remarry (I Cor. 7:15).

4. Salvation Wipes the Slate Clean: If a person comes to faith in Messiah while single, they are free to remarry, regardless of how many times they were previously married and divorced (II Cor. 5:17). At salvation, all past sins—including unbiblical divorces—are forgiven, and the believer is considered a new creation in Messiah.

Key Principles and Conclusion

From these teachings, several key principles emerge regarding divorce and remarriage. First, the liberal allowance for divorce under the Mosaic Law has been restricted under grace. We cannot use Deuteronomy's provisions as justification for seeking divorce in the Church Age.

Second, legitimate divorce allows for legitimate remarriage. In both the Old and New Testaments, when divorce occurred on biblical grounds, remarriage was permitted (Mt. 19:9; I Cor. 7:15).

Third, divorce is never mandatory. In both testaments, divorce is presented as an option, not a requirement. The ideal is always reconciliation, to forgive and restore the marriage whenever possible (Hos. 3:1-3; I Cor. 7:10-11).

Fourth, God's original design for marriage was permanence. Believers should strive to make their marriages lifelong and honor the covenant they have entered (Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:16).

Fifth, under grace, only two grounds for divorce exist: adultery and the departure of an unbelieving spouse. Any divorce outside of these two grounds is unbiblical.

Sixth, a civil divorce does not always constitute a valid divorce in God's sight. If a couple divorces for reasons other than those permitted in Scripture, they remain married before God. In such cases, remarriage is not an option; they must either seek reconciliation or remain unmarried (Mt. 19:9; I Cor. 7:10-11). If remarriage occurs after an unbiblical divorce, it constitutes continuous adultery (Mt. 5:32). The proper course of action in such cases may be an annulment of that marriage and not merely confession.

Seventh, salvation provides a fresh start. If a person comes to faith after a history of multiple marriages and divorces, all past sins are completely forgiven (II Cor. 5:17). If they are single at the moment of salvation, they may remarry. However, if they are already married—regardless of how many previous marriages they have had—they must remain with their

current spouse and strive to honor the sanctity of that marriage.

In conclusion, the biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage is not ambiguous. It only becomes unclear when people attempt to justify their actions outside of God's revealed Word. The safest approach is to remain faithful to the plain statements of Scripture rather than allowing cultural or societal norms to dictate a believer's decisions.

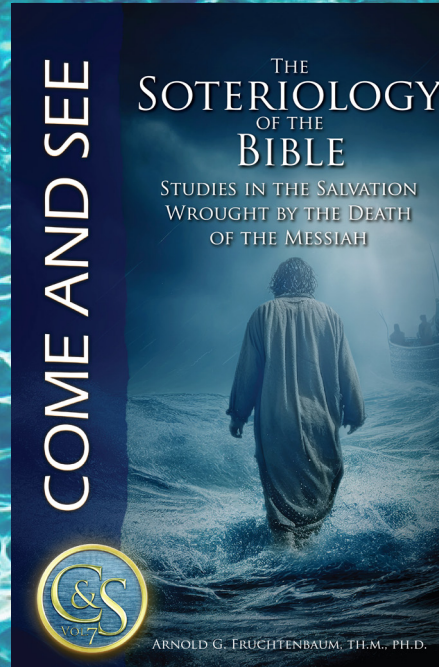
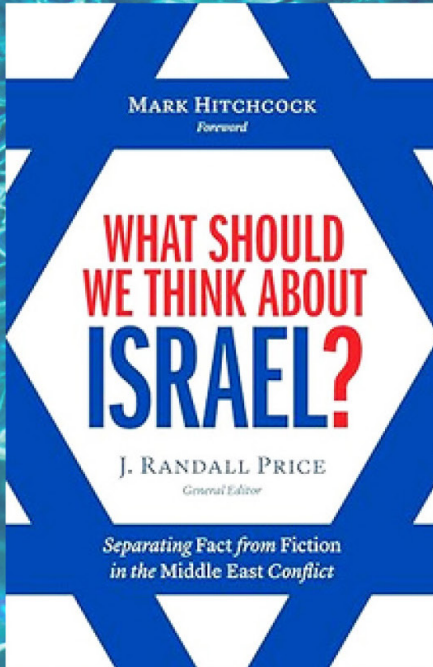
If we truly hold to the verbal inspiration of Scripture and believe that the Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice, then we must submit to its teachings. The issue of divorce and remarriage is not a matter of subjective interpretation—it is a matter of obedience or disobedience.

Let us strive to obey the Lord, uphold the sanctity of marriage, and remain faithful to the commands of Scripture.

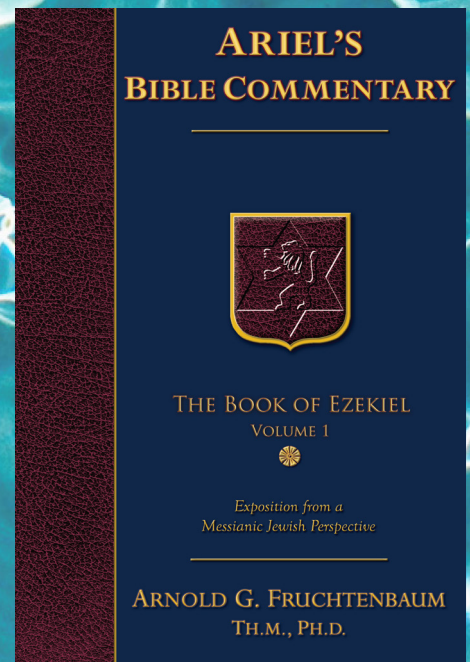
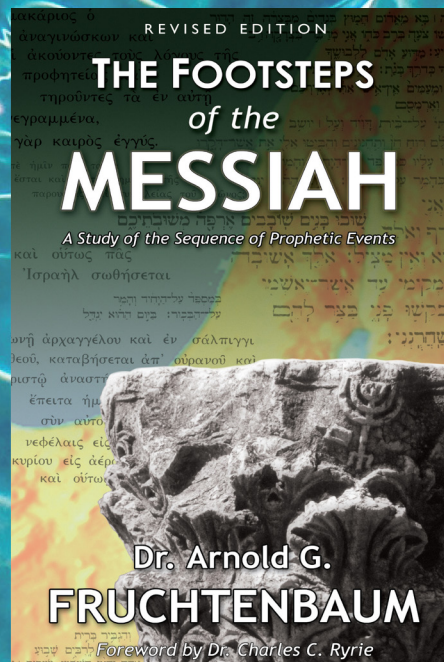
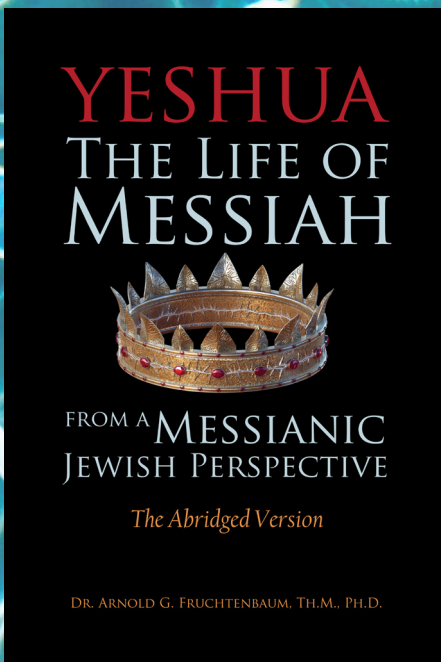


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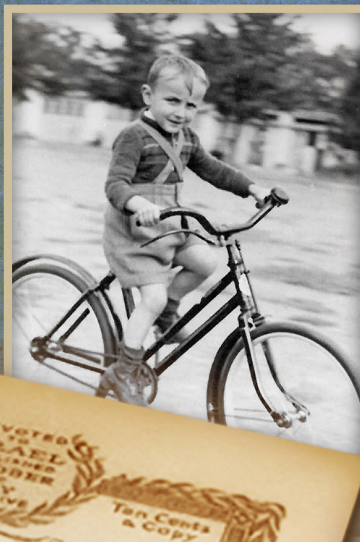
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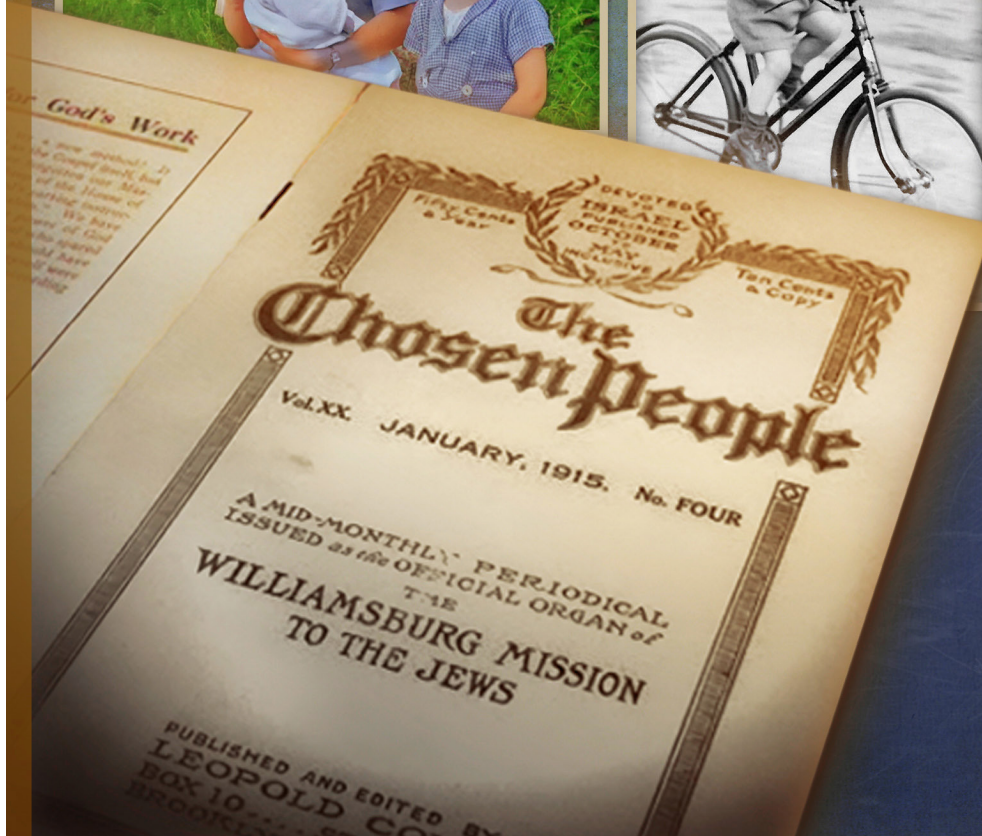
The Remarkable Story of Ariel Ministries' Oldest Branch

By L. Jesse Grace¹

Germany



Ariel Ministries has over ten international branches, the oldest of which is in Germany. The history of this branch traces back to the aftermath of World War II, beginning in a Displaced Persons (D.P.) camp. The Fruchtenbaum family lived in six such camps across Germany until the United States government finally granted them permission to immigrate. Shortly before their departure, a Lutheran pastor handed Mrs. Fruchtenbaum the cover of a newsletter—an act that would not only lead to her son's salvation but also, decades later, to the establishment of Ariel Germany. In this article, L. Jesse Grace recounts the remarkable story of this branch's origins.

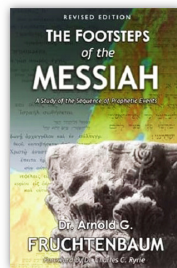




For reasons known only to God, the publication of Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum's original version of *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* was delayed for more than five years. Although the typed manuscript was completed in late 1977, a series of mishaps and complications postponed the book's release until the end of 1982. Yet, what seemed like frustrating setbacks ultimately proved to be God's means of reconnecting Arnold with a significant event from his past.

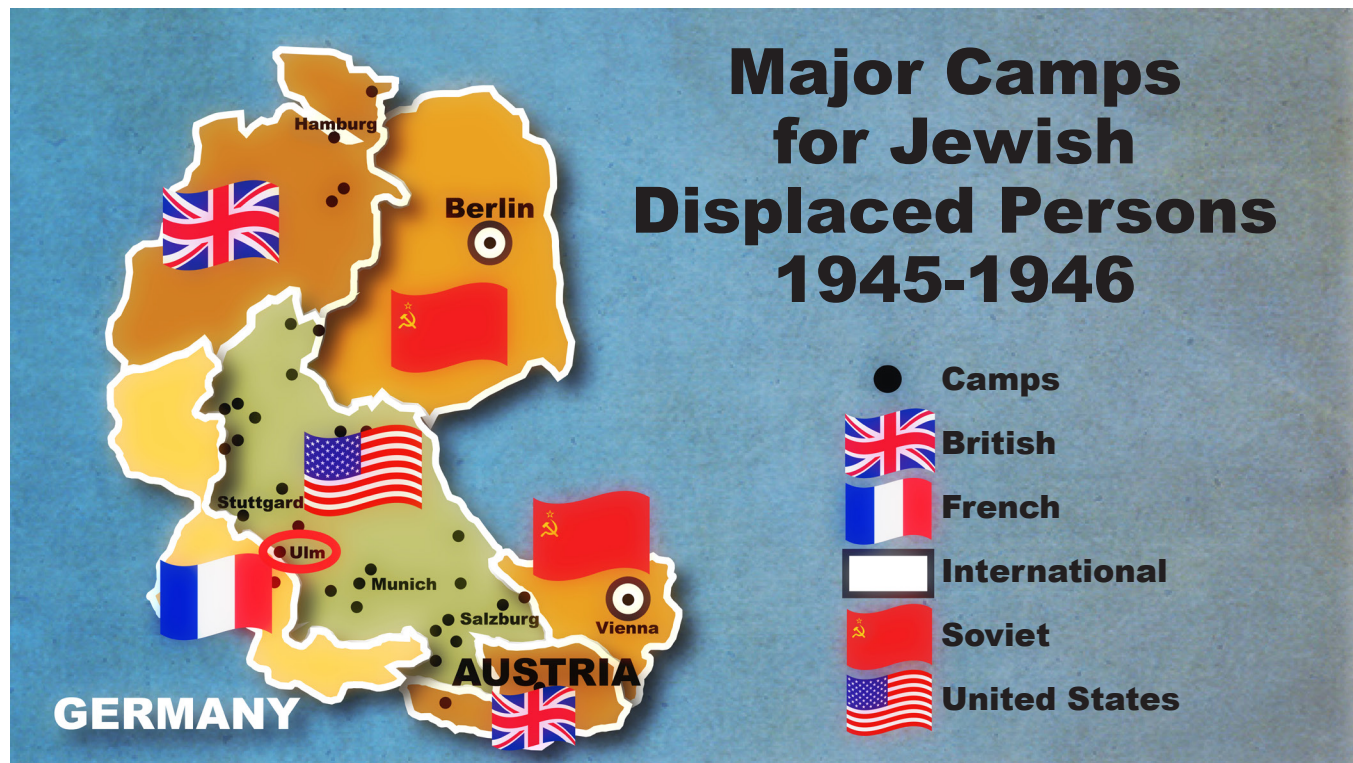
In early 1984, one of the largest publishers in West Germany expressed interest in translating and publishing *The Footsteps of the Messiah* into German. With ample resources at their disposal, they

planned to handle both the translation and marketing. The book was divided into two volumes, scheduled for release at the end of 1984 and the following year. True to plan, the first volume of the German edition, *Handbuch der biblischen Prophetie*, was published in early 1985, and this book quickly gained traction throughout Germany, leading to an invitation for Arnold to write another work, *A Dictionary of Bible Prophecy*, which the publisher intended to produce exclusively in German.



Letter from Germany

Shortly after the release of the first volume of *Footsteps*, in February 1985, Arnold received a letter from a woman living in West Germany. She explained that her husband had discovered the German edition of his book in a bookstore. The title in the display window had caught his attention, and although he was unfamiliar with the author, he knew his wife was interested in prophecy and purchased it for her. Upon seeing the author's last name, she immediately recognized it as belonging to a family she had known in a D.P. camp in Ulm in 1949. However, unaware that Arnold's first name had been changed from Arichek, she inquired whether he was the same person from the family she and her father had known.



¹ This article is based on L. Jesse Grace's biography of Dr. Fruchtenbaum, titled *Chosen Fruit: The Personal Life Story of Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Founder and President of Ariel Ministries* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2015). The original text has been edited for the purpose of this magazine.



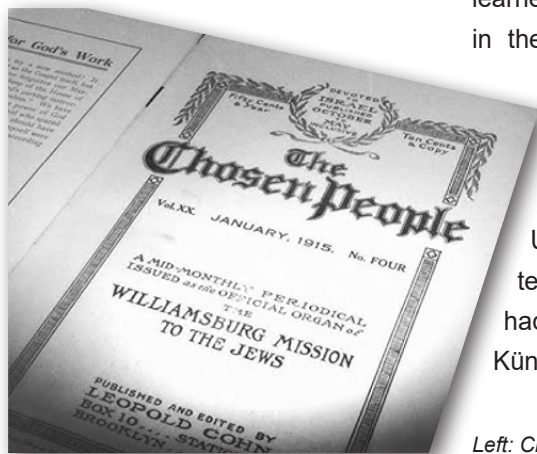
To confirm, she listed the names of his parents and his two younger siblings, both born in Germany, and provided her own father's name: Theophil (Theo) Burgstahler.

When Arnold read the letter, he was astonished. The woman was Hanna, the daughter of the German Lutheran minister who had befriended his parents at the D.P. camp in Ulm!



Above: Theo and Hanna Burgstahler

Theo had been the very one who, upon learning of the Fruchtenbaum family's plans to immigrate to America, gave Arnold's mother, Adele, the cover of the October 1949 issue of *The Chosen People* magazine, published by the American Board of Missions to the Jews (ABMJ) in New York City. That single gesture had set in motion the series of events that ultimately led to Arnold's salvation.



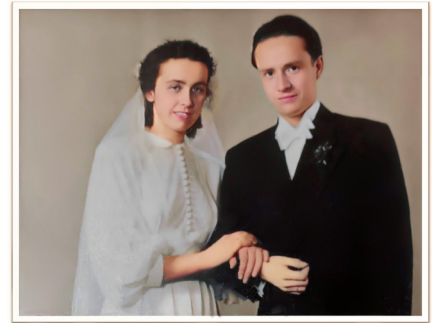
Searching for the Burgstahlers

When the Fruchtenbaums left Germany, Arnold was too young to retain lasting memories of Hanna and her father. As he grew older and came to faith in the Messiah, he sought to learn more about his own family's history. Upon discovering the pivotal role that the Burgstahler family had played, he longed to reconnect with them and share how their kindness had shaped his life.

However, the Fruchtenbaums had moved frequently between D.P. camps before immigrating to America, losing all contact with those they had known in Germany. Over the years, Arnold had made numerous attempts to locate the Burgstahler family, often enlisting the help of German students attending his seminars, conferences, and Bible colleges in the United States and Canada. Despite their efforts, the search always proved fruitless, and Arnold eventually resigned himself to the thought that their reunion would have to wait until heaven.

Now, years later, Hanna had found him. Arnold replied immediately, and a series of letters followed. He learned that Theo had passed away in the mid-1960s and that Hanna was now married, living about three hours from Frankfurt.

The reason that past searches had failed became clear: Upon marrying Manfred, a chartered public accountant, Hanna had changed her last name to Künstler.



Above: Hanna and Manfred Künstler

Surprising Developments

Plans were quickly made for a reunion in the summer of 1985. Since Arnold and his wife, Mary Ann, had two short trips to Israel scheduled for the late spring, they arranged to visit the Künstlers on their way back to the United States. Extending their stay at the Frankfurt airport hotel, they rented a car and made the three-hour drive to Hanna's home.

The long-awaited reunion was deeply moving. Though Hanna, a reserved and traditional German woman in her mid-fifties, greeted them formally with a handshake, the depth of emotion within her was unmistakable.



Above: In 1985, the Fruchtenbaums met with Hanna Künstler (right) in Ulm

Left: *Chosen People* Newsletter



able. She had often wondered what had become of the Fruchtenbaum family and never expected to see Arnold again. Arnold, too, was overwhelmed, marveling at how God had orchestrated their reconnection.

As they reminisced, Arnold uncovered a surprising detail. His father, Henry (known as Chaim at the time), had asked Theo and Hanna to be his godparents. The revelation astonished him. Henry, an ultra-Orthodox Jew who had lost his faith in Judaism while escaping to the Soviet Union, later became vehemently opposed to Arnold's belief in Jesus. Why, then, would he have made such a request to a Christian minister?

The reason remained a mystery. Perhaps, overwhelmed by Theo and Hanna's kindness, he had momentarily let down his guard. Or maybe, amidst the uncertainty of post-war life, he simply wanted to ensure that someone would care for his son should anything happen to him.

Thirty-Six Years of Prayer

Regardless of Henry's reasons, Hanna had taken her role seriously. From the moment she was asked to be Arnold's godmother, she prayed daily for his salvation. Even after losing contact, she remained faithful in prayer—every single day for thirty-six years.

Before his passing, Theo had encouraged her to persist, assuring her that one day she would know if her prayers had been answered. Now that day had come. Hanna was overjoyed to learn that not only had Arnold come to faith in Messiah Jesus

but he had also founded a ministry reaching Jewish people worldwide.

During their visit, the Künstlers took Arnold and Mary Ann on a tour of Ulm, including the former army barracks that had once housed the D.P. camp where Theo had met Adele and little Arichek. They also visited Theo's gravesite. Standing before the resting place of the man whose simple act of kindness had ultimately led to Arnold's faith was deeply moving.

However, the two-day reunion was profound not only for its personal significance but also for its spiritual implications. Arnold and Mary Ann, who had faced their own struggles with childlessness, deeply resonated with Hanna and Manfred, who also had no children. Yet, through Hanna's unwavering prayers, Arnold had come to salvation, and countless Jewish and Gentile lives had been impacted through his ministry. In a way, Hanna's life had come full circle.

A Branch Is Born

Shortly after Arnold and Mary Ann returned to California, they received word that Hanna and Manfred wished to volunteer for Ariel Ministries in Germany. With Arnold's

blessing, the couple eagerly took on the work of translating materials into German and distributing study resources. God had not only answered Hanna's prayers in a way she never could have imagined, but He had also given her a new opportunity to serve Him.

What began as a simple translation effort soon grew into a full-fledged branch of the ministry. The Künstlers organized Arnold's teaching tours throughout Germany, accompanying him and interpreting for him in churches across the country.

To this day, the work that began four decades ago continues to thrive. Ariel Germany has grown into a substantial team, and whenever Arnold comes to teach, the churches and meeting halls are filled with eager students of the Word.

Looking back, it is clear that the long delay in publishing *The Footsteps of the Messiah* was divinely orchestrated. What had once seemed like frustrating setbacks had, in reality, been God's way of leading Arnold to rediscover a pivotal connection from his past. The faithfulness of one woman's prayers had shaped the course of his life and ministry, proving once again that God's timing is perfect and His plans are beyond human comprehension.



Above: Hanna and Manfred Künstler at their 50th anniversary





YESHUA

Is the Jewish Messiah

Proof from Science

By Thaddeus Kedziora



The identity of the Messiah is a pivotal question in both Jewish and Christian thought, and the evidence found in Scripture points unmistakably to Yeshua of Nazareth. This study explores how fulfilled prophecy, mathematical probability, and the scientific laws of information confirm the divine authorship of the Bible and the certainty of Yeshua's Messianic role.

The late American astronomer and planetary scientist Carl Sagan, who taught at Cornell University, once proposed the theory that the universe has always existed. However, this assertion is not a scientific statement but rather a belief that, like a religious conviction, requires faith without empirical evidence.

Christianity, while also requiring faith, offers evidence in the form of fulfilled prophecies recorded throughout Scripture and history—prophecies that have been fulfilled with absolute accuracy. According to *Dake's Bible*, there are 3,268 verses, written by more than forty authors, containing prophecies that have already come to pass over a span of 1,600 years.¹ Others have estimated that over a quarter of the Bible consists of predictive prophecy.²

These numbers have led German engineer and young earth creationist Dr. Werner Gitt to formulate a prophetic mathematical proof of God that is based on the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. Using an analogy from the animal world, Gitt illustrates that the probability of 160 prophecies being fulfilled by chance is comparable to randomly selecting a single red ant from a heap of black ants with a volume equivalent to ten trillion suns.³ This, he argues, serves as mathematical proof that the God of the Bible is the only true God and that the Bible is the book of truth.⁴

God Himself, through Isaiah, declares: “I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is still to come. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do” (Isa. 46:10-11). And again, “Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you” (Isa. 48:5).

Math Proves the Existence of God

According to Dr. Gitt, the fulfillment of Old Testament Messianic prophecies can be verified with absolute certainty through mathematical calculations. His research underscores that eschatology and fulfilled Old Testament Messianic prophecies should not be regarded as secondary or tertiary matters but as subjects of primary importance.

In his book *Information: The Key to Life*, Gitt introduces the scientific fact that information is a nonmaterial entity.⁵ It is distinct from the physical medium that carries it (e.g., DNA, books, computer code). Gitt classifies information as something that cannot be reduced to mere matter and energy.



He also argues that, according to the physical law of causality, every event must have a cause.⁶ If information exists, it must have a source, and that source must be intelligent.

Life Is Tied to Information

Given these premises, materialists and evolutionists face an impossible task—not only in explaining the existence of matter⁷ but even more so in accounting for the origin of information and life itself.⁸ Information, Gitt asserts, is a fundamental, non-material entity that cannot arise from purely material processes; it always originates from an intelligent source.⁹ Life is fundamentally tied to information (e.g., the genetic code). Since life is governed by complex, coded information (such as DNA) and is itself a nonmaterial entity,¹⁰ this points to a nonmaterial source.¹¹

Furthermore, another scientific law, postulated by Louis Pasteur, states that life can only come from life.¹² This principle challenges abiogenesis—the idea that life arose from nonliving matter. A purely material entity, Gitt argues, cannot give rise to a nonmaterial entity.¹³

Dr. Gitt concludes that the scientific law of information proves God's existence. He describes this as a prophetic-mathematical proof of God, beginning with fulfilled prophecies of information in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴

¹ Werner Gitt, *Information: The Key to Life* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, New Leaf Publishing Group, 2023), pp. 256-259.

² J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020), p. 13.

³ Gitt, *Information: The Key to Life*, p. 265.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 405. ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118. ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 146. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 182. ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 167. ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 177. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 394. ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237. ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

The Law of Information and the Hebrew Bible

The first announcement of a savior is found in Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed: he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Arnold Fruchtenbaum's commentary on Genesis reveals that this passage speaks of two seeds. The Hebrew Bible consistently traces genealogies through the male line, implying that the *seed of the woman* refers to the Messiah, who will be conceived supernaturally, without a human father. This is the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible.

This prophecy also introduces the concept of Satan's *seed*, which will imitate God's supernatural conception of Yeshua. This future prophetic satanic conception will culminate in the Antichrist, whose mother will be a Roman Gentile, while Satan himself will be his father.¹⁵ Fruchtenbaum's commentary on Daniel further demonstrates that the Antichrist will be ethnically connected to the people who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D.—the Romans

(Dan. 9:26).¹⁶ However, Satan's immediate response to Genesis 3:15 is found in Genesis 6:1-2.¹⁷ Now aware that the Messiah will come from humanity, Satan attempts to corrupt mankind to prevent the Messiah's future arrival. This corruption takes place through the union of fallen angels with human women, leading to the existence of the Nephilim.¹⁸ To eradicate this corruption, God sends a global flood, destroying all of humanity except for Noah and his family, who alone remain untainted.

Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. However, only one of them could be the bearer of the line of promise. In Genesis 9:26-27, God designates Shem as the chosen line. The challenge now is that the Semitic peoples diversified into numerous individuals and tribes, multiplying the possible paths through which the Messiah could come.

God further refines this selection in Genesis 22:15-18, where He chooses one man through whom the Messiah will ultimately come: Abraham. God promises that through Abraham's seed alone, the Messiah will arise, bringing blessing to the entire

world, encompassing both Jews and Gentiles.

Abraham eventually fathered eight sons, each of whom, at first, had an equal probability of being in the line of the Messiah. However, in Genesis 17:19, God predicts that the 100-year-old Abraham will have a son named Isaac, who will fulfill the Messianic line. Isaac then has two sons, but God selects Jacob as the bearer of the Messianic lineage (Gen. 26:3). Jacob, in turn, marries Leah and Rachel, fathering twelve sons, once again expanding the potential line of the Messiah. However, in Genesis 49:10, while on his deathbed, Jacob prophesies that his son Judah will be the one through whom the Messiah will come.

Eight hundred years later, with countless families descended from the tribe of Judah, God further refines the Messianic lineage through the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah 11:1-2, He reveals that the line will continue through a specific individual, Jesse, ensuring the preservation of Jewish ancestry leading directly to the Messiah.¹⁹

The probability of predicting, 800



¹⁵ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2009), p. 103.

¹⁶ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Daniel* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2023), pp. 402-403.

¹⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *Genesis*, p. 104.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-152.

¹⁹ Gitt, *Information*, p. 411.



years after Judah's birth, that the Messianic line would come through a specific man from among thousands of Judah's descendants is astronomically low—virtually impossible by human standards. This precise narrowing of the lineage demonstrates the divine orchestration of biblical prophecy.

Through the prophet Samuel, God further refines the Messianic lineage by choosing one of Jesse's eight sons. Jesse presents seven sons before Samuel, yet none are God's chosen one. When Samuel inquires whether Jesse has another son, Jesse mentions his youngest, David, who is out tending sheep. Samuel calls for David and, upon seeing him, anoints him as the chosen king (1 Sam. 16:6-13).

David later fathers nineteen sons, but once again, God specifically chooses one to carry the legal royal bloodline of the Messiah: Solomon (1 Chron. 28:5,7). This divine selection process continues to unfold with remarkable precision, eliminating all human speculation and chance.²⁰

Solomon's legal royal bloodline continues through generations and ultimately leads to Joseph, the husband of Mary, as recorded in Mat-

thew 1:1-16. Meanwhile, Solomon's brother Nathan carries the physical bloodline, which eventually leads to Mary, as traced in Luke 3:23-38.

In Genesis 3:15, the prophecy implies that through the virgin birth, the Messiah must be God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, fulfilling the promise through Nathan's lineage to Mary. At the same time, the Messiah also had to be fully man, a requirement fulfilled through Solomon's lineage to Joseph.

However, as Fruchtenbaum explains in *Yeshua – The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, Joseph's lineage was under a curse due to the wickedness of Jeconiah (Jer. 22:30). This curse made it impossible for any of Jeconiah's descendants to rightfully sit on David's throne, disqualifying Joseph from being the biological father of the Messiah. Instead, the Holy Spirit was the true father of Yeshua, ensuring both His divine and human qualifications as the Messiah.²¹

Isaiah 7:14 makes it unmistakably clear: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." The prophecy leaves no room for ambiguity—the Messiah must be born of a virgin.

Handling of Eschatology Has Eternal Consequences

The mathematical probabilities of fulfilled Messianic prophecies are staggering, demonstrating the divine inspiration of Scripture. The Bible is complete—nothing more will be added. God Himself warns of adding to or subtracting from the text of Scripture. One means of doing so would be false interpretations, doctrines, or systems of belief that contradict the literal, grammatical, and historical words of God through allegory. Deuteronomy 4:2 warns, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." The very last sentences in the Bible also warn anyone of adding or taking away from the words of this book (Rev. 22:18-19). Therefore, the handling of eschatology has a most serious and eternal consequence.

Sadly, many Bible scholars either imply or state outright that one's beliefs about prophecy are secondary or tertiary matters of significance. However, Yeshua, who claimed authorship of the book of Revelation, says otherwise. Those who add to or subtract from God's revealed Word

²⁰ Gitt, *Information*, p. 412.

²¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua – The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2017), Vol. 1, p. 283.

demonstrate by such actions the reality of their unregenerate condition.

God Is Truth

Dr. Gitt's teachings point out that Old Testament Messianic prophecies can mathematically prove that the God of the Bible is truth. This truth is evidenced through encoded information within each individual human being and all living matter. This information has no human origin; however, of necessity it must have an intelligent sender or originator as its source. This proves that God must exist, which doesn't deny science but rather augments it.

Lost Genealogical Records Point to Messiah's Identity

Those who still await the first coming of the Messiah are left with only the existing Scriptures. However, they face an insurmountable problem: After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, all Jewish genealogical records were lost. Anyone claiming to be the Messiah today would need to prove Davidic lineage, yet the necessary genealogical records no longer exist and never will. This makes it impossible for anyone—now or in the future—to legitimately claim Messianic status. The only One who fulfilled these prophecies while verifiable records still existed was Yeshua of Nazareth.

All the evidence needed to identify the Messiah is already recorded in the Jewish Scriptures. Demonstrating that Yeshua is the Jewish Messiah is not difficult—it simply requires

diligent study, connecting the prophecies and teachings of the prophets with the entirety of God's Word. Yet, believing that Yeshua is the Messiah is an entirely different matter from merely acquiring information. The dividing line is expressed in Habakkuk 2:4: "The righteous will live by his faith." It is not just about knowing the truth; it requires an act of the will—a conscious choice to accept God's Word and His gift of salvation.

Scripture, evidence, and reason can only point the way, but each person must take the first step.

Every human being and every religious system must grapple with a few fundamental questions: *Where did I come from? What is my purpose in life? Where am I going when I die?* Materialism, science, and evolution cannot provide satisfying answers to these existential questions. Even Darwin's *Origin of Species* deals with what occurred *after* species existed, not with their origin or the source of life itself.

Conclusion

The gospel is the message of salvation through Yeshua's atoning death on the cross, which is clearly foretold in Isaiah 53—a profound Messianic prophecy. He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. By His wounds, He has healed us. He was oppressed and afflicted, never said a word, was slaughtered like a lamb, was buried in a rich man's grave, and died for our sins. On the third day, He rose again, which enables the Messiah to see His offspring, meaning those who be-

lieve in Him. The overwhelming evidence confirms that Yeshua fulfilled all prophecies of His first coming.

The issue, therefore, is not a lack of information but a willful blindness to accept God's offer of redemption. Believing in Yeshua as the Messiah is the first step. It is like stepping onto the universal information bus—Yeshua will take it from there.

The probability of that? 100%.



Thaddeus Kedziora holds a master's degree in social sciences and retired after 32 years as a letter carrier with the USPS. He has dedicated over 40 years to the study of Bible prophecy and has led a home Bible church for 20 years. He is the author of *Last of the Last Days* and *Return to the Garden of Eden*.



"One Coincidence Too Many"

By Matthew Sieger



Life often unfolds in ways we least expect. For Matthew Sieger, success came early—top of his high school class, a degree from Cornell, and a promising career in journalism. Yet beneath the surface, he wrestled with deep questions about purpose and identity. A series of unexpected encounters—some seemingly coincidental, others unsettling—led him on a path of discovery that challenged everything he had been taught as a Jewish man. From a simple conversation in a student clinic to a phone call that defied all odds, his story is one of searching, questioning, and ultimately transformation.

Born in 1953, I was raised in northern New Jersey. Both of my parents are Jewish—not religious but culturally very much so. As a result, I grew up not thinking much about God but focusing heavily on achievement, especially academically. I graduated first in my high school class of 550 students and went on to Cornell University, where I earned a degree in psychology. I also wrote for *The Cornell Daily Sun*, the school newspaper, and became interested in journalism. Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications awarded me a full fellowship, and I earned a master's degree in magazine journalism there. I then became a sports reporter for the *Cortland Daily Standard* in Cortland, New York.

Outwardly, everything seemed to be going well. Internally, however, I had begun to struggle, especially during my time at Syracuse University. At one point, I became very ill with mononucleosis and went to the student clinic, where I was seen by Dr. Indira Koshy, an Indian woman who took the time to talk with me about God. She was the first person who ever spoke to me about a personal God who cared about me. She showed me my name—Matthew—in the New Testament, in the Gospel of Matthew. She handed me a small green Gideon's New Testament and encouraged me to read it while recovering from my illness.

I read a little of it, but as I got better, I thought, *Well, I don't really need this anymore*, and I went on with my life. Then I got the job as a sports report-

er in Cortland. Internally, however, I still had a lot of unrest; I was never truly at peace with myself or others. Through some friends, I got involved in an encounter group, something very popular in the 1970s. As I would later discover, the group had demonic roots, and my depression grew worse.

Ironically, however, some in that group were Christians who also didn't realize what they had gotten into. One of them gave me *The Living Bible*, a paraphrased version in very understandable English, as opposed to the traditional King James English.

When my personal life hit rock bottom, I decided to read the Bible. The first book I chose was *Job* because I heard he had suffered greatly, and I figured I could relate to that. As I continued reading the New Testament, one verse that stood out to me spoke directly about the Jewish people. It was from the book of Romans: "Does this mean that God has rejected his Jewish people forever? Of course not! His purpose was to make his salvation available to the Gentiles, and then the Jews would be jealous and begin to want God's salvation for themselves" (Rom. 11:11). When I had met Gentile believers in Jesus, I noticed they had a peace I did not have, and that made me jealous! That verse resonated deeply with me.

As I continued reading the Bible, I began to think, *Yes, it looks like there is a God, and maybe He does care about me. But there's also this person Jesus in the New Testament. As a Jew—raised never to believe in Jesus—how do I make sense of*

this?

One night, I was talking with a Jewish friend of mine named Carol. We were at my home, and it was about nine or ten at night. I told Carol, "You know, I think I can believe in God now, especially because some things happen to me that I can't explain. For example, sometimes I'll think about someone I haven't seen in a long time, and then the phone rings—and it's them. But I don't see how, as a Jew, I can believe in Jesus." Carol responded, "Yeah, me neither."

Just then, the phone rang. I looked at Carol as if to say, *Oh, this must be God calling—one of those strange coincidences.*

The caller was looking for someone named Lisa, who no longer lived at my address. When I told him that Lisa had moved, he continued talking: "Well, I had loaned Lisa a book, and I was hoping to get it back from her."

"Sorry," I said, "Lisa moved, and I have no idea where your book is." I expected him to hang up. Instead, he added, "I also wanted to invite Lisa to a lecture on campus by a Jewish believer in Jesus." Then he said, "I myself am a Jewish believer in Jesus."

I looked at Carol, stunned, as if I had just seen a ghost. I had been talking about coincidences and Jewish people believing in Jesus, and suddenly, here it was—all wrapped up in one phone call!

So I told the guy, "Well, Lisa isn't here, but I am, and I'd like to go!"

I attended the lecture by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum. Afterward, I tried to speak with him, but he was surround-



ed by others. However, I met a couple, Rick and Nancy Cochran. Rick was a Gentile Christian, while Nancy was a Jewish believer in Jesus. They invited me to a Saturday morning Bible study at their home.

Each week, they and their friends answered my many questions. After several weeks, I asked the Cochrans if they attended a church, and I began going with them. Through those church services and reading *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis, I came to understand that Jesus claimed to be the Jewish Messiah—not just a man but God in the flesh.

On Sunday evening, August 6, 1978, the church showed the film "A Thief in the Night." The movie depicted the rapture and followed a young woman who missed it because she rejected the gospel. It terrified me! After the movie, I turned to my believing friend Mike Barbalas, who sat beside me, and asked him to listen as I prayed. I simply told God that when all these end-times events unfolded, I wanted to be on His side!

I did not feel an instant transformation, but over the next few weeks and months, I began experiencing a peace in my heart and a love for people that I had never known before. However, I had a few terrifying dreams in which a masked man was choking me in my sleep. I could barely breathe and had to shake myself awake.

One Sunday, I told my pastor about the dreams. After the service, he called the elders to anoint me with oil and pray for me, as instructed in the book of James: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Jas. 5:14).

As they prayed, I suddenly saw the man from my nightmares—his mask removed. It was the leader of the encounter group! He had masqueraded as an angel of light, just as the Bible says: "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Messiah. And no wonder, for even Satan dis-

guises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

From that moment on, I never had those dreams again.

In the summer of 1979, the Cochrans told me about Ariel Camp Shoshanah, where Dr. Fruchtenbaum conducted Bible teaching in the Adirondack Mountains. I attended a three-week session, which helped to ground me in my faith.

I later worked for another Messianic Jewish ministry, serving as a missionary, editor, and writer. I eventually bookended my career by returning to sports reporting, this time for a newspaper in Vacaville, California. After retiring, I wrote *The God Squad: The Born-Again San Francisco Giants of 1978*.

Before I knew the Lord, I had achieved most of what I set out to do, yet I was still miserable. The greatest blessing of my life has been the transformation that happened from the inside out.



Matthew Sieger has a B.A. from Cornell University and a master's degree in magazine journalism from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications. He was a sports reporter for several newspapers. He is a Jewish believer in Jesus and has written numerous magazine articles about Christian athletes.

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Continued from page 15

is the last remaining Romaniote synagogue in the Western Hemisphere.”¹⁶ There are also two active Romaniote synagogues in Israel, one in Tel Aviv and one in Jerusalem. About half of the Ioannina community moved to New York after the turn of the century. Most of those who remained were deported to Auschwitz on Erev Pesach, 1944. Other communities in the region were deported at the same time (e.g., Kastoria in northcentral Greece). There were significant connections between the Jews of Ioannina and those in Albania, too; the latter survived the war for the most part due to the hospitality of the Albanians.¹⁷

HOLOCAUST

Canaris Constantinis became the president of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS), an organization formed after the war to help assess and rebuild what was lost. His work provides a depressing account of the devastation left by the Nazi occupation. Constantinis painstakingly traveled throughout the country and visited synagogues, community centers, offices, schools, businesses, nursing homes, cemeteries, and other Jewish properties in an effort to reconstruct Jewish life in the country and reorganize some sense of structure for the

remnant population. His son later published these notes to show numerous locations where once-thriving Jewish communities either became inactive or simply dissolved.¹⁸ Of all the countries the Nazis occupied, Greece lost more of its Jewish population than any other—a full 86 percent perished.¹⁹

THESSALONIKI

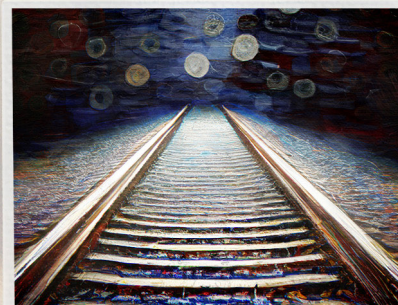
After the arrival of Sephardic Jews in the fifteenth century, Thessaloniki came to be known as *Jerusalem of the Balkans*. Greece took its first state census in 1913: “In a total of 157,889 citizens in Thessaloniki, 61,439 were Jews, 45,889 were Turks, and 39,956 were Greeks.”²⁰ Of the three largest demographic groups, the Jewish population was the most numerous and culturally influential.

In 1919, the Jewish workforce was recorded as follows: 750 professionals; 1,900 businessmen; 6,100 small merchants; 7,450 office and shop clerks; 7,750 craftsmen and workers; and 9,000 longshoremen, porters, boatmen, and fishermen.²¹ The family of the Jewish entrepreneur and philanthropist Moise Allatini opened the largest flour mill in the East—the biggest in the Balkans—and became extremely influential.

Even more sacred than the synagogue was the Jewish school. Talmud

Torah Hagadol, a high-level school for religious instruction, had been in operation in Salonica since 1520 and had left an indelible mark on the community. However, some more elite members of the community began looking for better opportunities for their children and invited educators from Paris to bring their Alliance Israélite Universelle to Salonica in 1873. In 1913, they enrolled 3,180 students in their eight private schools with instruction in French.²² There was growing involvement in cosmopolitan learning, athletic teams, social clubs, and all the joys of modernity.

Devin Naar, Professor of Sephardic Studies at Washington University, carefully documents how some of the Salonikan Jewish community’s educational and social choices came back to haunt them.²³ In 1933, the community appointed Zvi Koretz as chief rabbi. He was an impressively trained, liberal-minded scholar with a doctorate from the College for the Science of Judaism in Berlin. Whether through his foolish hopes or simply poor leadership, his counsel to the local community and interactions with the Greek government and Nazi occupying forces contributed to the community’s uniquely tragic losses. Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg laments, “For the German bureaucrats, he was an ideal tool.”²⁴ The *Encyclope-*





dia of the Holocaust recounts, "About 20 transports, carrying 43,850 Salonikan Jews, arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau between March 20 and August 18, 1943. Most of the new arrivals were immediately gassed."²⁵ Some 90 percent of Thessaloniki's Jewish community perished.

After the German takeover of 1941, aided by Greece's neighbors who, like jackals, plundered Jews' properties, the formerly cosmopolitan and open character of the city was replaced by a religio-nationalist policy, marking the Jews for eventual destruction and systematically marginalizing the Jewish community.²⁶

Heartbreakingly, some of this human hatred still persists today throughout Greece. Even as the broader Greek society and community leadership in Thessaloniki attempts to acknowledge their failures toward its Jewish citizens, the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party became the third-largest political party in the Greek Parliament in 2015, and their swastika-like logo was found spray-painted on the city's Holocaust memorial along with leaflets claiming that the mayor is a "slave of the Jews."²⁷ Thankfully, the party sank dramatically in public opinion by 2019, and a guilty verdict on October 7, 2020, sent their leaders to prison for leading a criminal organization. To-

day, Freedom Plaza memorializes and honors the victims of the Holocaust in the same place where thousands were gathered by the Nazis before being sent to their deaths.²⁸ A major project is being undertaken to construct the Holocaust Memorial & Human Rights Educational Center as a public monument prominently along the city's western waterfront.²⁹

Out of the ashes, the Jews of Salonica seek to understand their reality and rebuild their community. Considering their devastating losses, it is surprising what still exists and what is planned for their future.

THE PORTS OF THESSALONIKI AND HAIFA

When the Jews were given up from Thessaloniki, only those who were away assisting with the building of the port of Haifa survived. Later, the mayor of Haifa from 1951 to 1969, Abba Hushi or Khoushy—born in 1898 as Abba Schneller—visited Thessaloniki in commemoration of the connection between the two cities. Since most of the workers in the port of Thessaloniki were Jewish, it was closed on Saturdays in honor of the sabbath.³⁰

VERIA (BEREA)

Veria's Jewish heritage dates back to at least the first century A.D., as Paul

preached in their synagogue in Acts 17:10-15. Like Philippi, Veria—and the synagogue itself—is situated along a river. The Tripotamos River is formed from three tributaries, and it runs through the Jewish neighborhood of Barbouta. Since rivers and landscape tend to stay in the same general location even over centuries and since it is common for Jewish places of worship to have access to running water for ritual purification, it is likely that the modern synagogue is located in the same general area as its ancient counterpart.³¹

The area was originally home to Romaniote Jews from earliest times who later assimilated with the Sephardic majority in Thessaloniki, about forty-five miles away. Today's synagogue was built from stone in 1850 and served the local Sephardic community. While the synagogue building is maintained, there are not enough Jewish residents in the area to hold regular services. An occasional visit by a delegation from elsewhere may hold special services from time to time.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Only nine Jewish communities throughout Greece remain active today, with approximately five thousand Jewish people living in the country—mostly in Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioan-



nina, Chalcis, and Corfu. Restoration and conservation projects continue to preserve the history of Greek Jewish life. Impressive work is being done at Jewish museums in Athens, Thessaloniki, and Rhodes. Jewish heritage tours and websites have sprung up for those wanting to experience “Kosher Greece.” Athens boasts a thriving though hidden elementary school for Jewish children, and many locals at synagogues both there and in Thessaloniki can converse in modern Hebrew. The Israel-Greece Chamber of Commerce promotes ties between the business and social communities in the two countries.³²

FAMOUS JEWS OF GREEK ANCESTRY

The Romaniote Jewish community

produced many famous rabbis, liturgists, ethicists, philosophers, physicians, politicians, musicians, and poets plus at least two who claimed to be the Messiah—Moses of Crete in the fifth century and Sabbatai Zevi in the seventeenth century.

Other people of note also hail from families with Greek-Jewish ancestry. The father of Vidal Sassoon (1928–2012)—the British American hairstylist, businessman, and philanthropist who grew up in a Greek Jewish community in west London—was from Thessaloniki. Former President of France Nicolas Sarkozy (born 1955) descends from Jews from Thessaloniki. Jamie-Lynn Sigler (born 1981) of *The Sopranos* fame is of Sephardic Greek heritage. Literature Nobel Prize recipient Pat-

rick Modiano (born 1945) is the son of Italian Jews who settled in Greece and helped develop Thessaloniki’s banking industry. Michael Castro (1945–2018), a poet and translator who was named the first Poet Laureate of St. Louis, grew up in the Romaniote Jewish community in Manhattan.

GREEK CULTURE IN ISRAEL TODAY

Some seven hundred Greek songs have been translated into Hebrew and popularized by Israeli artists. Each Friday at 4 p.m., as the whole country prepares to enjoy the Shabbat, Israel Radio broadcaster Yaron Enosh dedicates his program almost exclusively to Greek music and culture, and this affinity for Greek music in Israel has been around for decades. Though not





Jewish himself, Aris San (1940–1992) moved to Israel from Greece, became an Israeli citizen, and popularized Greek music in his new homeland. President Shimon Peres told the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation, “In Israel we love the Greek Music. For us Greece is a country but also a melody.”³³

The famous Greek singer Stelios Kazantzidis (1931–2001) was a musical icon among Israelis. One writer describes him as “the voice that contained all the pain and desires of post-war, poverty-stricken Greeks, many of whom had to migrate to make a living abroad.”³⁴ Ben Shalev, in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, called Kazantzidis the “Greek pillar of Israeli music.”³⁵ His music filled the emotional spectrum from joy to sorrow and pain to pleasure. Israeli broadcaster Samiko Reitman says, “[Kazantzidis] was the voice of the people, of the weary, the exploited, the betrayed. And the voice of the refugee and the emigre, too.”³⁶ Such pathos relates well to the groans and glories of Jewish history. Today, twelve internet radio stations with an Israeli listenership of over 800,000 people exclusively broadcast Greek music!³⁷ A station near Tel Aviv named Radio Agapi broadcasts Greek music from Israel twenty-four hours a day.

And what goes better with music than food? The cuisine of Greece is having a cultural comeback of its own. Some see this as a return to the cultural roots of many Sephardic Israelis whose ancestors lived in the Balkans.³⁸ Greek taverna style eateries with names like Yasas, Yassou, Kalamata, Ouzeria, Greco, Sparta, and Olympus are popping up in Old Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Herzliya, and even Jerusalem. Athens is only an

inexpensive two-hour flight away, and many Israelis travel to the mainland or the islands of Corfu, Kos, Mykonos, or Santorini for an almost local yet international getaway.

JERUSALEM AND ATHENS

Philosophers and theologians have asked the following question for centuries: “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”³⁹ One answer to this question comes from the co-founder and past director of the Jewish Museum of Greece, Nicholas Stavroulakis. He points out that it was within this world “founded by Alexander the Great and his successors, or built according to Greek urban ideals by the Romans” that “modern post-Exilic and Rabbinic Judaism was born, as was that of its estranged sister, Christianity.”⁴⁰ More than mere cultural and culinary affinities, these cultures share the role of providing the historical and linguistic background that unites the two Testaments—one written in Hebrew and one written in Greek. Those who search the Hebrew Scriptures about the Messiah will see striking fulfillments in the Greek: what is concealed in the Old is revealed in the New.

The divine plan was revealed to the prophet Daniel that both Alexander (11:3-4) and Antiochus (8:9-14) would come to trouble Israel—but their dominion would not last. Ultimate sovereignty and shalom would come through “Messiah the Prince” who would give His life as a sacrifice to “make reconciliation for iniquity” by being “cut off” prior to destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 (9:24-27).

Similarly, the prophet Isaiah foresaw a day when the nations (including those from Javan and the Greek coastlands)

would come and worship the promised Messiah in Jerusalem:

I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the LORD, “as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. (Isa. 66:19-20)

When Messiah Yeshua returns to rule and reign in Jerusalem, His fame and salvation will be known throughout the earth. Even now, His offer of salvation today “is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).



Tim M. Sigler (Ph.D., Trinity International University) is CEO of Ariel Ministries and serves as President of Ariel College of the Bible and Messianic Jewish Studies. He loves teaching the Bible on location and

hosts study tours throughout the biblical world with Wisdom Passages. Through his extensive travels in Israel and the Middle East, he seeks to equip his students with an understanding of the historical and cultural world of the Bible, the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, and the ongoing role of Israel in God’s redemptive plan.

**Websites and Museums**

- ✧ ADL Global 100
- ✧ Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece
- ✧ Holocaust Museum of Greece
- ✧ Jewish Museum of Greece
- ✧ Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki
- ✧ Jewish Heritage Europe
- ✧ Jewish Heritage Tours
- ✧ Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)
- ✧ News Archive
- ✧ Jewish Virtual Library
- ✧ Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum
- ✧ Kosher Greece
- ✧ Museum of the Jewish People - Beit Hatfutsot
- ✧ Rhodes Jewish Museum
- ✧ Synagogue Etz-Hayyim of Chania
- ✧ Yerusha: Jewish Archives Europe

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¹¹ Rae Dalven, *The Jews of Ioannina* (Belgrade, Serbia: Cadmus Press, 1990); "The Jewish Community of Ioannina – The Memory of Artefacts" an exhibit of the Jewish Museum of Greece.

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¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See "The City Concealed: Kehila Kedosha Janina," *PBS*, accessed March 5, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/video/the-city-concealed-kehila-kedosha-janina/>.

¹⁷ Personal interview with Mattithiah Friedman, a descendant of the Manhattan Romaniote community.

¹⁸ Moses C. Constantinis, *The Jewish Communities of Greece after the Holocaust: From the Reports of Canaris D. Constantinis 1945* (Athens, 2017), p. 32.

¹⁹ See "Holocaust," *Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS)*, accessed March 5, 2025, https://kis.gr/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=401:holocaust&catid=99:2009-06-04-07-06-01&Itemid=76.

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³⁹ Tertullian, *De praescriptione*, vii. Unfortunately, Tertullian (c. 155–240), the original inquirer, was an early example of an emerging form of replacement theology that saw the church supplanting Israel in God's redemptive plan—as if God were finished with the Jewish people. For an explanation and counter to this notion, see Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010).

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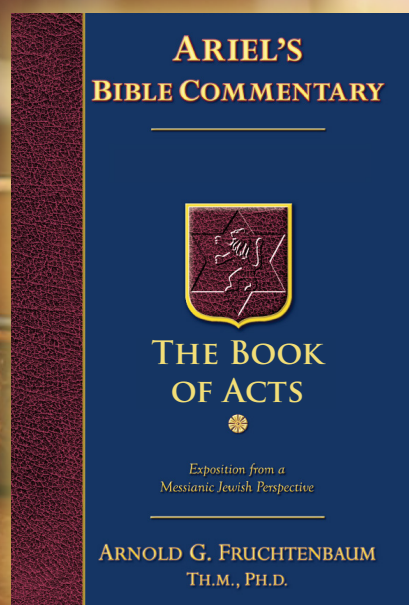
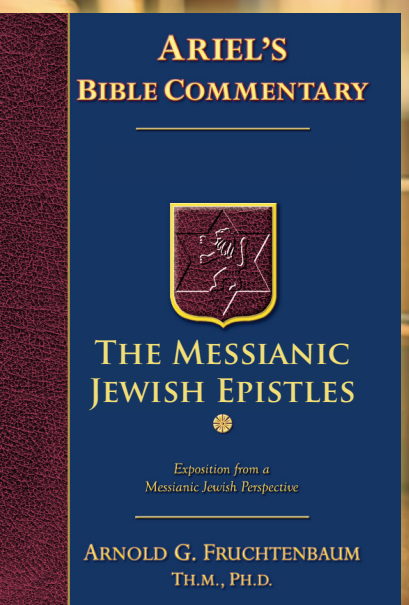
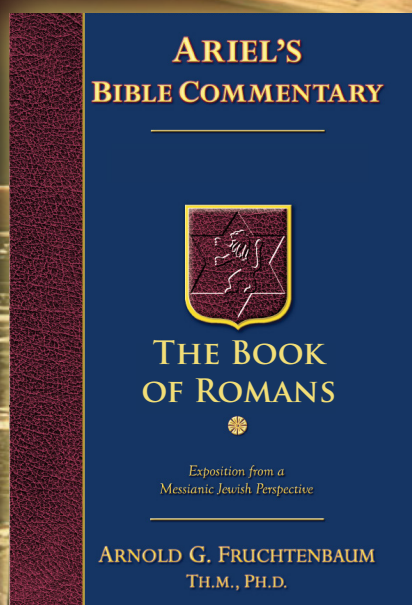
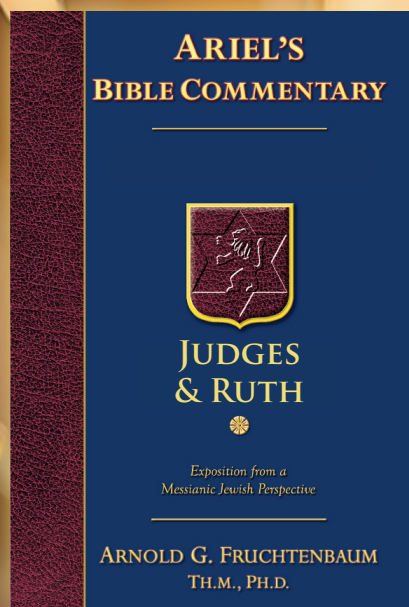
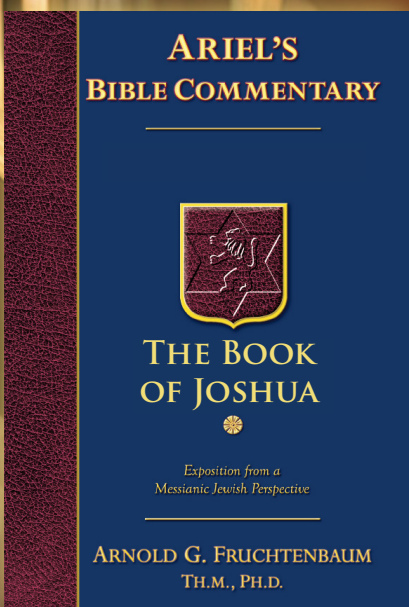
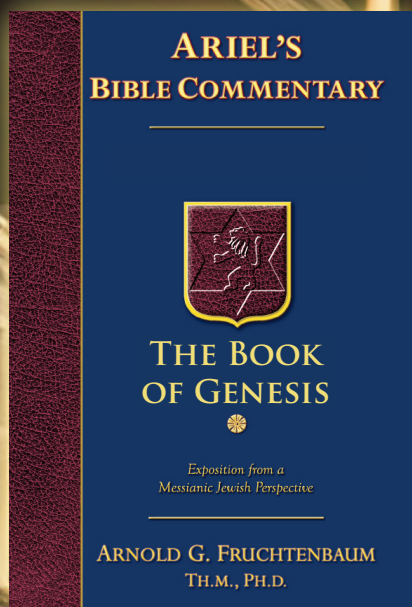
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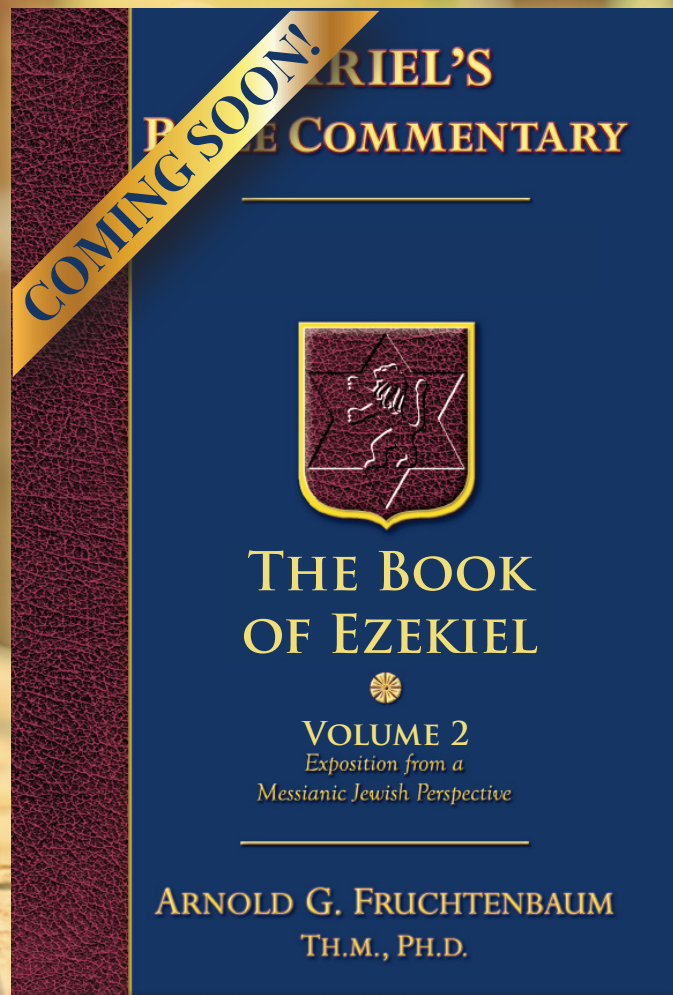
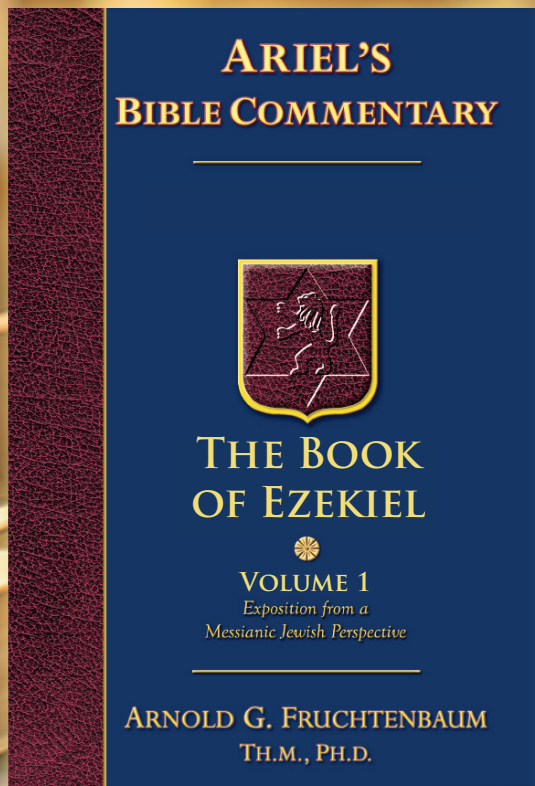
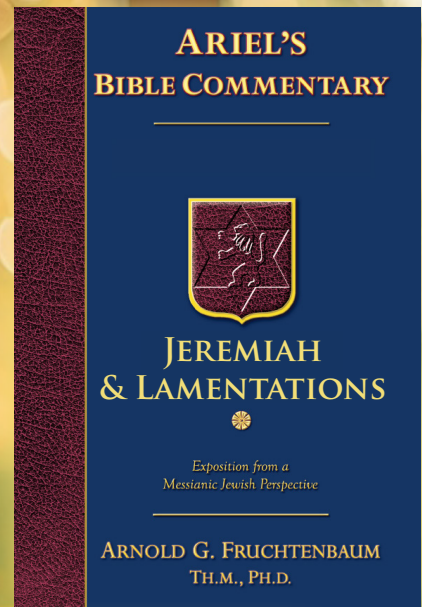
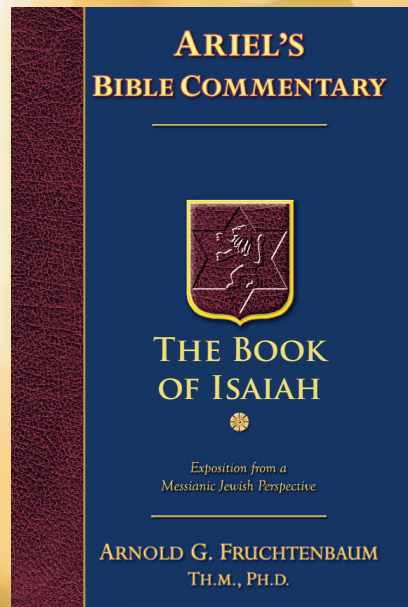
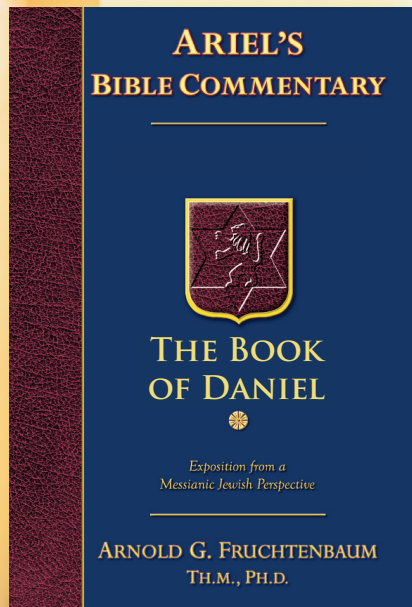
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